

**ACHIEVING GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION IN SOUTH SUDAN:
POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

by

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This study investigates gender inequalities in South Sudan that are affecting women's and girls' participation in education. Non-governmental agencies have condemned this inequality in education, but there has been little progress towards remedying it because the country's leadership failed to perceive it as a problem. Women and girls are isolated from the male-dominated South Sudanese mainstream society. This study explores why females have low participation rates in the education system in South Sudan.

The absence of females in the education system and the job market is affecting not only the women's or girls' wellbeing, but also the welfare of South Sudan as a nation. The lack of consistency in support of Education for All (EFA) has been a challenge for the South Sudanese at least from the international and economic perspectives. Gender equity in education has not been achieved because educational attainment is usually predicted by the socioeconomic status of the family and being male. Females whose families were better off financially before the war were still limited in their access education.

Although this educational exclusion of females continues to be a major concern little has been done to correct it. Little research has been done on this subject, meaning there is not much literature about gender inequalities especially in education in South Sudan. Therefore, this study makes a useful contribution to this important topic.

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PREFACE

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To my family and friends, I thank you all for the encouragement and support you have provided. As I always said, my journey is your journey and my hope is your hope and it is through these cycles that help keep us undivided and supporting each other. All your support has finally brought me this point and I am very thankful for it.

ACRONYMS

AAUWEF	American Association of University Women Foundation
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CERC	Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC	Convention on the Right of the Child
EFA	Education for All
GEM	Girls Education Movement
GOSS	Government of South/ern Sudan
GPI	Gender-Parity Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDP	Internal Displaced Persons
IIEP	Institute for International Economic Policy
IR	Intake Ratio
MDGs	Millenniums Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
RALS	Rapid Assessment of Learning Spaces
RGG	Relative Gender Gap
SBA	School Baseline Assessment
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiatives
UNIC	United Nations Information Center
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States of Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WRC	White Ribbon Campaign
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a citizen of South Sudan, I have firsthand knowledge regarding social issues in the country where the thinking ability and social skills of females are often taken for granted and undermined. In many of our South Sudanese cultures, females are treated as possessions rather than as human beings. This untold suffering of females and depriving them from their rights is a traditional norm, so practical training of females in schools is often viewed with very tense opposition. This firsthand knowledge has helped me to understand the lack of transparency that exists in many South Sudanese communities. These pervasive realities of cultures continue to affect modern progress in society, such as the lack of equal education opportunities, especially among girls. Therefore, this knowledge, which I have acquired over my lifetime, has motivated me to conduct this research because I have experienced it and will continue experiencing it if no significant cultural and social changes are made. As a South Sudanese citizen, the communities which I am part of have always been very consistent with how traditional South Sudanese practices are valued. These traditional practices are considered inhumane in various parts of the world because they often limit or discourage social mobility.

Building an educational foundation has been widely accepted worldwide as one of the tools by which to improve the economic situation of individuals and countries. This study investigates educational policy in South Sudan, where female illiteracy is widespread, with the hope that the findings will be generalizable to other similar regions. It is not uncommon for

families to keep their children out of school because they cannot afford tuition. The unaffordable cost of education can be seen as a weakness of the government—one of many, in the case of South Sudan. This history of weakness in education can be traced back to the early days of colonialism from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. Due to Islamic government control, education was never equally distributed in Sudan as a whole, leaving South Sudan under-developed in this area.

Today, there are enormous problems associated with education in the whole of South Sudan, even after independence. Currently, many South Sudanese people want a quality education; however, females are yet to be fully integrated into the school system. This lack of parity in educational opportunity between the sexes has received surprisingly little attention, overshadowed by a plethora of other problems faced by the South Sudanese people. As a result, there are limited materials on the topic of gender inequality in education upon which to draw for this study. Therefore, a number of different sources inform this study regarding discrimination, education, poverty, health, civil war, and violence against women. Those originating outside of academia must be treated with caution, as some of them may be from unreliable sources.

As of now, significant progress has been incorporated into the education system, yet gender bias continues to affect girls' education attainment. Therefore, as mentioned early, the main objectives of this thesis are to achieve gender parity, equality and equity in education, and to help establish and identify an unprecedented mechanism that would address gender discrimination as a social problem facing South Sudanese females in the education system. The research study cannot look at every single aspect that plays a role in the weakness of education, but will address the hard core elements, which will help to establish or rectify a social policy to

guide the country's education. Given that this is an exploratory research study, multiple research methods were used for data collection and analysis.

This study aims to elucidate factors that constrain females' mobility educationally, socially, politically, and economically. Therefore, I consider not only key issues in gender in education, but also many of the post-conflict problems such as tribal conflicts, militias, and economic severity, which are limiting girls' educational access and attainment. Safety concerns have reduced access and educational attainment for many females unwilling to deal with the obstacles; this injustice has suppressed women's potential to achieve their dreams. For the most part, equal participation of the sexes in education needs to be reassessed and corrected. Therefore, this study not only promotes this idea of equal education, it also investigates inconsistent representation of female teachers to provide role models.

Given the nature of the problem and the need for equal education, this work could not be done without reflecting upon the materials provided under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in turn is a response to Education for All (EFA). In fact, without the MDGs, some countries would have continued gender discrimination. Now that MDGs exist, many countries have incorporated it into their educational system to help all children learn better. In Third World countries, lack of education for girls and women has been identified as the greatest enemy to EFA, which is why prioritizing MDGs becomes an important tool to address gender inequality in education and also in the job market. The current situation is deeply enrooted in the culture of South Sudanese society. Educational disparity in South Sudan is the greatest threat to the long term well-being of the new country. Therefore, the solution must promote educational equality, and access to education for all children, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, gender, race, or their religious affiliations.

As of 9 July 2011, South Sudan had emerged from the longest and most damaging civil war to become the newest nation. The war has left millions of children uneducated and it has exposed others to violence. Therefore, it created a loophole in the country's educational system that existed for more than two decades. South Sudanese give no accommodation to females on account of their gender, so this study is intended to reevaluate current policy to address the outstanding issues in education, which have dragged girls away from their potential.

This study clarifies females' social roles in South Sudanese society and demonstrates how these roles affect their productivity as citizens. These include restrictions based on norms set by the many cultures in the country, which have forbidden and limited girls from obtaining education. These norms are the major obstacles, exercised by those who are less informed about the importance of EFA. However, even though some of these cultural elements can be altered by the government, attempts at change were unsuccessful. The government established a legal age for leaving school and mandatory school attendance, but the system has failed to execute these policies, rendering them ineffective. Legally, those who are playing a role in diverting girls away from education should have been held accountable, but the government has failed to impose penalties. The government should have led the effort to equalize education in these cultures where people are skeptical about educating females.

The war in South Sudan has jeopardized education in general by raising parental concern and indecision regarding whether to send children to school. According to USAID (2011), "Education in conflict and crisis environments is a function of providing security, services, infrastructure, and stability where the absence of such fundamental requirements will prevent effective learning" (p. 14). Indeed, education ceases to provide opportunities and be meaningful during conflict because young girls anticipate being forced out of class to marry and boys are

forced into the armed forces. South Sudan is educationally in the situation described by USAID above, due to long conflict, which has changed how education is provided. Educational progress was halted by the conflict. EFA was the last thing on the minds of the people who were disturbed by the civil war, which exposed their children to danger and violence.

Children's participation in warfare at a young age has disrupted the continuity of education. Additionally, although education is usually considered an important tool to engage children regardless of their gender, socioeconomic status, or religious affiliation, it has been intentionally mismanaged, neglecting females when the war destabilized the region. Even though few institutions were open at the time of conflict, they were still negatively biased towards females in their choice of who was more deserving of education.

In the twenty-first century, education is an important tool to link humans and the environment through knowledge. Gaining knowledge through formal education provided at institutions such as elementary schools, high school, colleges, and universities will eventually help the new nation economically, socially, and politically. However, rigidities applied to certain groups, such as girls, has interfered with the accessibility of school at all levels and weakened the whole country. Sex determines where individuals fit, whether in school or the workplace. In the educational system, sex plays a role in every aspect of decisions made by men.

Gender influences social and institutional decisions, especially in things that matter in everyone's lives. The majority of decisions are made by men, so society is dominated and governed by men's ideologies, which have somehow isolated females. Equalizing EFA has championed the free provision of primary (Grades 1 through 8) education around the globe. This universal agreement was implemented by few countries, while others continue to neglect the agreement. Many countries do not live up to the obligations, instead choosing what they prefer,

which is why many girls in South Sudan were still underrepresented in EFA before 2015. The MDGs are apparently not as well balanced as expected by the UN and the Western donors, which apparently believed that universal education would equalize primary education. However, the focus has been only on boys in many Sub-Saharan Africa countries, especially in countries like South Sudan where cultural issues are extremely important. In addition, the MDG expectations of each country are often neglected, frequently causing division and negligence by the authorities.

1.1 BIASES AGAINST FEMALES

People's views of female education in different societies vary, but the negative biases can be overwhelming. Culturally, South Sudanese view educated women as less demure and lacking in femininity. Outspoken women, especially educated ones, are seen as boisterous and not taken seriously. As a result, females occupy the very bottom of the ladder in all aspects of their lives. Regardless of their education, females are the most disadvantaged group socially, economically, and politically; even the few who succeed in obtaining an education continue to struggle.

During the past seven years, little benefit has been shown for women since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005. The current administration discourages women's professionalization and education. For instance, the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) designated 25 percent of jobs in the federal government for qualified women, despite the fact that women compose more than 60 percent of the country's population (Gender Concerns International 2011). These tactics have been questioned by many women, but some

men oppose such questioning, asking about the roles women played during the conflict. In the face of such reproach, many women are reluctant to continue questioning the fairness of the new nation to which, it is perceived they contributed little during the civil war. In reality, women assumed important roles such as child care, farming, and providing sustenance to the rebels.

Common misconceptions have made it a lot harder for girls to adapt to such an unwelcoming environment. The absence of policies to guide government and schools has deprived girls of their rights to education, distressing females who are educationally prepared. Females are less empowered because the majority of schools provide little protection or none at all; schools are left to operate under their own rules and regulations, yet they are not legally permitted to focus on only male students.

The authoritarian government in the formerly unified Sudan gave little attention to female education. This has kept women illiterate, especially South Sudanese, for most of the past six decades. However, the reasons for excluding women are undefined and not evidence-based. The equal participation in education and other social promotion of females can improve social settings, but this has not occurred in South Sudan, which is dominated by men playing by the rules of exclusion. This deprivation of rights has attracted attention from the international community.

Primary education is considered one of the fundamental rights for every child under international law. Therefore, the UN wanted to restore these rights through the MDGs, which are intended to address gender barriers in education in many underdeveloped countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hyer et al. 2008). Unfortunately, these goals were not successfully implemented in many underdeveloped countries, such as South Sudan, where the girls' illiteracy rate is far higher than any other African country. The persistent gender inequality beyond the

year in which the gap was meant to be closed became a fundamental problem: each country had to ensure that it had complied with the MDG's deadline (Hyer et al. 2008).

However, Hyer and her colleagues (2008) acknowledge the problems in implementation of the education-related MDGs. First, part of the targeted year had already passed prior to the start of implementation; second, as anticipated by the UN and the international community, there was some governmental resistance to these goals. It was crucial for success that goals be implemented through the encouragement of all government sectors, local and federal, in underdeveloped countries. The MDGs aimed to help with the high level of illiteracy in South Sudan (92 percent in 2011), but the country's response was slow and lacking in many areas. The governments and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), upon whom fell the responsibility of cultural change to promote education for females, have not done enough to intervene (Hyer et al. 2008). The failure to implement or impose the MDGs is due to the national culture of gender intolerance. The South Sudanese have failed to recognize the importance of the rules of governing, the access, and redistribution of knowledge in the country. The politics behind the isolation of females in the country and the long civil war have caused distaste because females are traumatized.

Nevertheless, the international community is working hard to incorporate social policies, which were established to protect and to eliminate gender barriers in education for the system that has been upheaved by many social problems. In South Sudanese society, men have long dominated resources for their own benefit, subjugating females through practices such as rape and forced marriage. The conservative culture and importance of a woman's dowry removes the importance for female education in society, and barriers continue in the education system even today. While South Sudan has consolidated with various NGOs, especially UNESCO, UNICEF,

and USAID, to fight these injustices, the progress remains minimal, meaning that females continue to experience oppression in South Sudanese society in every aspect of their lives.

In addition, widespread poverty and the under-development of the country have forestalled education. For instance, families who live on less than a dollar a day—not uncommon in South Sudan—have little or no resources for their children’s education. The lack of enough food for a family is prioritized over education, leaving gender inequality in education unidentified as a main problem. Over the course of the long civil war, a lot of people were uprooted, lives were changed, infrastructure was destroyed, and children were disconnected from education. In these unusual years of civil war, South Sudan fought injustice to create social inclusiveness in Sudan as a whole. The South Sudanese have experienced discrimination based on religion and ethnicity, which later led to two civil wars. The first and second civil wars were a result of social injustice inflicted on the South Sudanese by the predominantly Arab/Muslim population in Northern Sudan. However, gender barriers were never, and still are not, treated as a problem, even though women are the most oppressed population in Sudan or South Sudan.

The role of women in contributing to the welfare of the new nation economically, socially, and politically has yet to be considered. For these social issues to be fully addressed, equal education must be prioritized, so females can have the potential and ambition to succeed. Currently, females’ access to education is limited in the entire country; so far, the system has failed to comply with international laws. The authorities use the war as a scapegoat for almost everything. The distance of schools from village populations has affected enrollment, and those that are enrolled are more likely to drop out before they complete the last grade of primary school.

Girls' dropout rates are very high in primary schools, yet little is being done to improve their attendance. Women fall behind in their education or never attempt to attend school, due to gender bias or lack of resources in the family. As a result there is a 92 percent illiteracy rate among females (UNESCO 2011b).

It is recognized that many problems are associated with how education is delivered to children in South Sudan. For instance, the nature of the curriculum for females may not reflect their concentrated household schedule that has left little time for their studies. Research in Western countries has demonstrated that the two sexes perform equally well in academic settings, if given the chance. According to Sara Mead (2006, p. 3),

American boys are scoring higher and achieving more than they ever have before. But girls have just improved their performance on some measures even faster. As a result, girls have narrowed or even closed some academic gaps that previously favored boys, while other long-standing gaps that favored girls have widened, leading to the belief that boys are falling behind.

In fact, there are other indicators that girls generally perform better than boys in school. This stance is supported by Angela Lee Duckworth and Martin E. P. Seligman (2006, p. 198) of the American Association of University Women Foundation (AAUWEF): "Throughout elementary, middle, and high school, girls earn higher grades than boys in all major subjects, including math and science." In many European countries, both boys and girls do well in various subjects. For instance, Androulla Vassiliou (2009, p. 22) indicates that generally "female[s have] superiority in verbal skills and male[s have] superiority in mathematical skills." As indicated in examples above, there are many situations where girls and boys demonstrate comparable performance if given undivided attention in school. This undivided attention on equality and cultural relevancy is the main area lacking in the recently established education system in the new country.

Therefore, cultural and social obstacles are the causes of the extremely high illiteracy rate among South Sudanese women. Who is to be held accountable for this situation?

1.2 POSITIONING SOUTH SUDANESE EDUCATION

Education in South Sudan ranks among the lowest in the world: “South Sudan ranks second lowest out of 123 countries on net enrolment rates for primary education and last out of 134 countries for secondary education” (UNESCO 2011b, p. 3). According to UNESCO, South Sudan also has one of the highest rates of illiteracy globally. The under enrollment in South Sudanese education could be a result of gender discrimination and may be one of the reasons why South Sudan ranked so poorly in education. This situation causes us to revisit the question above: who is accountable for females’ deficit in education? The answers are deep-rooted within the socio-cultural lenses of gender discrimination, early marriage, and a lack of focus on access to education for all. The lack of intervention to address gender inequalities in education is also a contributing factor. UNESCO (2011b, p. 3), a major contributor to South Sudanese education, notes that, there were 1.4 million pupils enrolled at the primary level and 34,000 students at the secondary level, which itself does not reflect a country where children are the majority focus.

Achieving gender equity in education in South Sudan is one of the challenging tasks facing the country, yet there is high demand for education. Although this push for equal education stems largely from Western ideologies, this perspective is disputed by some in South Sudan. As of now, the focus is on equal education, but there are no quick solutions to these kinds of problems, so it is unpredictable when the South Sudanese education system will work its way up the global rankings. Many Western agencies have focused on the educational gap between the

sexes, so the lack of change can be attributed to society's unwillingness to improve this situation. Equal education is considered a Western idea, creating resentments at these proposals from the West, which are viewed as an invasion of cultures or as being politically motivated in what some countries are calling the tactics of neo-colonialism. In Western values, education is identified as a right for every child, so preventing children from attending school is punishable by law in countries like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

The values of education for females in many countries are limited due to the culture, which in turn has limited access to quality education. Western countries are more likely to address any negligence encountered by any persons, regardless of their gender, whereas, in South Sudan, laws do very little to address negligence on the part of the government to bring gender inequalities to the surface. However, after the war started, certain things changed, one of which was the education provided for girls in foreign countries where South Sudanese females had been given asylum under the UN provisions. These foreign countries were not safe for women and young girls, even under the UN; there were many cases of rape and forced marriages in the refugee camps because there was no protection. Looking back after the long civil war, the post-conflict period has left thousands of females vulnerable at a young age. Given their lack of representation in policy circles, their education has not been prioritized.

1.3 OPERATIONALIZATION OF DEFINITIONS

In this section, the main focus is on defining three terms: gender, equity, and post-conflict. According to Nkurunziza (2008, p. 4), "post-conflict refers to the period following the end of a conflict in a given country." During this phase, warring parties have signed agreements, but there

are outstanding issues to be resolved. There may be power sharing, but these post-conflict issues may continue to distract the fragile peace. The post conflict period is an indicator of unresolved disputes, which continue to drag parties back to war. The post-conflict issues can affect how, or even whether, schools are operated or how quality education is provided to children, with security taking precedence over education. For instance, the use of proxies in South Sudan by the North Sudanese government has created an unstable country because they have spread across the sovereignty of South Sudan.

UNESCO has defined “gender” as the social roles and responsibilities that are believed to belong to men and women within a particular social group; for example, “men as income earners” and “women as child caregivers” (UNESCO 2005, p. 1).

Equity may be confused with equality and opportunities, so these terms also merit definition. Jacob and Holsinger (2008) define equality as “the state of being equal in terms of quantity, rank, status, value, or degree,” whereas “equity considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness, and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational subsectors” (p. 4). To make gender equality or equity viable, opportunities must be made available to both sexes. Opportunity has been defined as “a good position, chance, or prospect, as for advancement or success” (Dictionary.com 2012). Indeed, the root cause of a lack of opportunities for South Sudanese women is gender bias and an imbalance in education. These have triggered a desire among various NGOs and the international community to help South Sudan focus on gender equality in education to better balance opportunities among citizens. Actions in this regard are likely to help women enter the job market.

1.4 GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the predominant South Sudanese perspectives toward females obtaining an education?
2. How can obtaining an education help females better contribute to South Sudan's economic stability?
3. What factors and conditions can best help South Sudan achieve greater gender equity through education?

These questions will be answered by reviewing various sources, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, news networks (e.g., Sudan Tribune, New Sudan Vision), journal articles, and books, based on the availability and accuracy of the materials and their reliability. The attitudes or any other key variables in these materials that strive to answer the research questions will be presented in a manner that complies with the study as a whole.

Regarding the first guiding research question, many South Sudanese people objectify females, treating them as sources of wealth. For many tribes, educating a girl is like giving away one's belongings and remaining poor for rest of one's life. Therefore, families and even communities view education for girls with skepticism. Education for girls is considered meaningless because it undermines the values of the culture and gives power to females, which is not tolerated by various tribes. This leads to the supposition: The more the South Sudanese value girls as sources of wealth (dowry), the more girls' education will be affected by the norms of the culture. The roles played by culture will continue to jeopardize girls' education from primary to secondary due to high emphasis placed on their dowry.

However, it has been noted that the government is doing little to ensure girls' education is valued. Therefore, the less action taken by the government to prioritize education, the lower the

women's and girls' educational attainment will be. Governmental input can improve both women and girls' education through execution of their laws and policies, which were meant to protect girls before the age of 18. This would give females the chance to acquire primary and even secondary education. The government's incompetence of handling and taking appropriate actions toward violence against females remains a debated issue because the authorities lack visible commitment to combat violence. There are no practical solutions if the government is inconsistent in the protection of females in and out of educational environments. The government's response is the last resort to guarantee safety to successfully address gender inequality in education and in the job market.

Culturally, sending girls to school is usually not in the interest of the families, who would rather receive a dowry. Men therefore use techniques that are considered immoral, such as setting an ambush to trap girls before or after school for the sake of marriage, or raping them. The majority of people see this as another form of marriage, whereas international laws consider it cruel. Education of females, therefore, has led to a situation where their lives are negatively affected due to others' violence against them in an attempt to prevent their attendance. The South Sudanese tribal culture is such significance that education cannot substitute the importance of dowry for many tribes, and the majority of women marry before their 18th birthday. As a result, the underachievement of females will continue if the government fails to abrogate some of the cultures' norms, which prevent the exploration of females educationally, socially, and politically.

The second guiding research questions relate to how education can help females better contribute to South Sudan's economic stability. In every country, human capital is the starting point and an important tool for the economy. So when knowledge is missing from human capital, the country's economy will at some point suffer. This becomes a problem if the majority of the

population is not educated, as is the case for most South Sudanese women. Unfortunately, constraints on women and girls have narrowed economic productivity for them individually, for their families, for their communities, and for the country because the human capital is not available. There are many things affecting the country due to lack of knowledge. For instance, the less the educated female knows about business, HIV/AIDS, teaching jobs, growing of staple crops, family planning, early marriage, poverty, and their rights. Due to insufficiency of education, she will stumble making the right decisions for her own benefit. This is compounded by the cultural norm of a girl not talking back to or disagreeing with her parents, even if she is unhappy with what is imposed on her. If South Sudanese females knew about, and were able to act on the knowledge in the aforementioned categories, the country would be in better shape economically, politically, and socially.

South Sudanese culture makes it inappropriate for a girl to express her emotions; if they do so nonetheless, their grievances are unheard or unresolved. If there was more flexibility in the country's educational system, females would improve the economy for South Sudan, creating further impetus for better education. Women's and girls' contribution to the economy can be achieved through open school enrollment, especially in primary and secondary levels, based on certain criteria. Despite this, the conventional post-war society, coupled with discriminatory cultural traditions and abject poverty, undermines the promotion of equal rights, which accounts for mistreatment of females in every aspect of their lives, irrespective of their educational background. As a result, females can contribute little to the development of the new nation (Gender Concerns International 2011). According to Mark Tran (2012) of *The Guardian*,

The cultural barriers to girls' education are formidable. As in many African countries, women and girls in South Sudan are responsible for most household tasks, including collecting water. The average time spent collecting water can be up to eight hours a day in areas with limited water and sanitation. Even when girls

do go to school, they can be subject to abuse by teachers. Last year in town of Rumbek in lakes state, protests broke out after some teachers were arrested for abusing girls. The state backed down and released the teachers after their colleagues went on strike.

The third guiding research question explores other factors to help South Sudan achieve greater gender equity through education. Currently the new country has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world (Gender Concerns International 2011). Social perceptions of women, lack of education, and other variables have made females vulnerable. It is known that cultural factors, such as early marriage, resistance to education for girls, and lack of privileges among females, have interfered with gender equity in education. Even though gender issues in education are solvable matters, the fear of giving females chances in education has been overshadowed by closed-minded perspectives predominately from males. This destabilizing of women's and girls' education appears to be intended to reinforce their weakness. However, these male figures have failed to identify the relationship between the economy and education, and the potential damage caused by limiting education. The economy will continue to be fragile if educational problems remain unresolved in a timely manner in South Sudan.

There are many ways to address these gender inequalities in this war-torn country. One is to start by reducing elements or factors that have a negative impact on education, such as insecurity, cultural norms, poverty, and discrimination. Gender stereotypes will always exist in any society, but much can be done to minimize their effect. For instant, if you look at countries like the United States (US), the United Kingdom, Canada, and other first world countries, women continue to encounter glass ceilings and discrimination in the job market, leadership positions, education, and government. According to Laura Fitzpatrick (2010), "That's because U.S. women still earned only 77 cents on the male dollar in 2008, according to the latest census statistics. (That number drops to 68% for African-American women and 58% for Latinas)."

Looking at the glass ceiling among many of the industrialized countries, there remains an enormous gap between working women and men. According to Catherine Rampell of the *New York Times*, “Across industrialized countries, men’s median, full-time earnings were 17.6 percent higher than women’s.” These references provide evidence that women continue to face gender discrimination in many well-off countries.

However, as mentioned previously, there are laws in those first world countries imposed to punish those who take the law into their own hands. These countries ensure that females contribute to the welfare of the nation. For example, in the United States, the Title IX bill was signed and passed by President Richard Nixon as part of the education amendment of 1972 to better protect the rights of women and girls. According to Title IX (1972), “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program.” Title IX has helped young females apply to some of the outstanding educational institutions without fear of discrimination. In contrast, countries like South Sudan, which depend on other countries economically, must fulfill certain standards based on international law to qualify for aid. These are better ways to address education’s problem in the third world countries.

Consequently, gender equity in education can only be achieved through the implementation of MDGs or EFA, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), girls’ rights, laws to impose age limits, safety laws to punish and protect, and culture change to ensure females get equal education. Changing South Sudanese laws to promote better outcomes in education will have a great impact. It would also be helpful to provide deterrence, in the form of limitations or termination of foreign aid to South Sudan if these laws are not implemented. This

was the case in the bill, International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act of 2009, to protect girls internationally. The bill aims to:

Encompass diplomatic initiatives between the United States and the governments of developing countries, with attention to human rights, legal reforms and the rule of law, and programmatic initiatives in the areas of education, health, income generation, change social norms, human rights, and democracy building. (H.R. 2103, 111th Congress 2009, Section 5)

These techniques can also help in the hiring process as women reach the job market. In fact, the CRC and MDG were intended to protect and educate children irrespective of their gender, so heavy emphasis on these two international laws will help South Sudan. However, as stated before, the literature shows that protection of females has never been prioritized in certain cultures, which is one of the biggest problems South Sudanese females faced during and after the civil war (Gender Concerns International 2011; Tran 2012).

This lack of protection routinely lowers their dignity and affects their daily lives. This is different from the United States, where people have equal rights before the law to protect them. Violence against women, such as rape, forced marriage, early marriage, and abduction, are forbidden by local or federal laws in the US, but still need some seriousness attention from the governments of South Sudan. For example, maintaining a minimum age for marriage should be mandatory. This would allow girls to complete their primary and even secondary education.

1.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, girls' education has been neglected in the mainstream of South Sudanese society. Although the Universal Primary Education policies have been rectified worldwide to address the gender problem, the government has still failed to impose laws, allowing cultural norms to

dictate educational practice. Even though the international community has gained some momentum through laws, the focus has not been widely accepted in various societies, which in turn hindered females' education especially in war torn countries. This concern encouraged the international community to establish MDGs to emphasize girls' education. However, it has been a while since the MDGs were established, and they have not yet strengthened education for all, leaving unsolved the problem of gender inequalities in education.

At this early stage of political stability, it is necessary to distinguish the major concerns, because the system has been so crippled by educational discrimination and weakness. This gendered education system, created and implemented by men, has created economic suffering for the over 60 percent of the population who are female and jeopardized the country's economy over all.

The right to education for all, based on the MDGs, is still being oppressed, yet there are corrective means to help guide the system. The lack of consistency on the part of predominately male administrators has interfered with fair Universal Primary Education provided to children in the entire country. This made others question the existence of the laws and MDGs in South Sudan. If MDGs were well received, it would have changed how children are viewed in the education system. With that in mind, gender skepticism about education would have been reduced if the administration was working to resolve gender inequalities in education. Gender equity, which is highly anticipated from MDG policies, would balance opportunities for females, but has not been implemented due to government reluctance and cultural values. This failure to comply with MDG despite pressure from international community has reduced the country's educational achievement and harmed its economy and general welfare. In fact, the grievances created by the imbalance of education have made the entire South Sudan a powerless state.

More strategies are needed to address gender inequalities in South Sudan, starting with interventions to ensure education is provided to all children in the country. Currently, there is evidence of gender bias in education even in the UN-run primary schools. Therefore, the central focus must be to boost girls' participation in education, which will eventually bring social transformation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is intended to portray the nature of the social problems facing females educationally in South Sudan. Gender inequalities in education in this new country were not investigated previously due to the inherent bias in the South Sudanese educational system and the prolonged civil war, which excluded researchers from Sudan. Therefore it is challenging to collect relevant materials that are informative to this study. For those very reasons, various sources help navigate through this topic and answer this study's research questions. Some of the materials or sources are treated with caution because of where the information was obtained, such as material obtained from the *Sudan Tribune*, *New Sudan Vision* and other related news networks. These materials may not be wholly reliable, but refraining from using them risks the loss of materials that may be supportive or enrich the subject matter.

As a researcher, I have put enormous effort into gathering the necessary literature on one of the most ignored subjects in the country. Fortunately there are NGOs, USAID, and other members of the international community involved, which has placed high emphasis on universal education for South Sudanese children, irrespective of gender. It is satisfactory that some NGOs, like UNESCO and others have consolidated with the building of the new nation to an inclusiveness of all in education, especially at the primary level.

Primary education mandatory enrollment has not yet been resolved due to many problems facing the new nation. Although the literature collected reflects poor attendance at all levels of

education, this study is focused mainly on primary and secondary levels, not higher education. Gender inequality in education in South Sudan has been a concern since the world has considered universalizing primary education and giving females the opportunity to a primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, widening participation in education has increasingly gained the attention of NGOs and the international community as a whole, so countries like South Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya are under pressure to incorporate policies that will respect and value females' right to education.

2.1 WAR AND EDUCATION

Sudan has been at war for 37 of the past 47 years. These years were wasted in two major civil wars (1955-1972, 1983-2005) predominantly fought in South Sudan. The two wars in Sudan have interfered or interrupted education for more than 50 years in South Sudan, and have been blamed for the country's low educational ranking. The people of South Sudan considered the safety of children as the top priority, but the children were still vulnerable. Since the independence of Sudan from Britain in 1956, the country has not been at peace. These wars ended with peace agreements that were later dishonored by the elites in Khartoum. At the present time, education cannot be considered in isolation, given the long history of political vulnerability and exclusion of the people of South Sudan (Deng 2003). The negligence exercised by the Northern Sudanese toward the South Sudanese and the resulting social injustice is largely explained by the recurrence of civil wars in Sudan.

In fact, the lack of well-educated Southern Sudanese has left females at a disadvantage in a corrupt country. The education system has been a key tool used by the Northern ruling elites to

manipulate and exploit the vulnerable South Sudanese for their own political and economic gain. Therefore, the lack of dissemination of national revenue has political marginalized the majority, especially rural communities in South Sudan. This is manifested in the absence of quality education in the region (Deng 2003). Although few educational infrastructures were left by Britain in South Sudan, the few remaining were later destroyed by the two civil wars from 1955-2005. So little was done to make education available to the South Sudanese, let alone to close the gender disparity in education, since the country was still engaged in hostility.

The deterioration of education and the existing social problems have been largely blamed on the northern government, but this is not appropriate for the current gender gap in education in South Sudan. Instead, responsibility lies with the culture. Education has been one of the factors most anticipated to change the lives of South Sudanese, by those who value it. Dr. John Garang placed a high emphasis on education and fought the Northern Sudanese for social equality. Garang knows the long term benefit of knowledge to the people of South Sudan. According to UNESCO (2011a), Garang never failed or neglected education as a whole, so his position on education shows how important it is to the people of South Sudan in the long term. He believes education will create opportunities for the people, and the country will develop as a result after the civil war.

It has been very clear that Garang knew the solutions to the problems in the South Sudan as UNESCO put it, “As one of the new country’s founding fathers, Dr. John Garang, constantly emphasized, it is through education that people and countries build the skills needed to strengthen self-reliance, expand choices, and create shared prosperity” (UNESCO 2011a, p. 1). Unfortunately it is well known that gender equity in education was not prioritized under Garang during the years he was the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA)/Sudan

People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the South during the civil war. Gender division in every aspect of life in South Sudan can be well defined by social mobility through the availability of resources; the priority of the distribution of these limited resources is usually given to help male children gain access to education, which is the outcome of education being granted to some family members over others. One of the resources are the cattle owned by the family, which are used to help educate boys, and rarely girls. It is very hard for a family to sell a cow to pay the tuition for a girl. Cattle are considered significant assets for many families in South Sudanese society.

Government has no input regarding who the families choose to be given education, and this is the cause of the government's inability to ensure children are treated equally regardless of their gender. The government has been very neutral when it comes to gender-related issues such as education and violence against women during and after the civil war, in contrast to the positions of governments in other similarly war-torn countries. For example, Korea was colonized by the Japanese and got its independence, then took a strong position in rebuilding itself after 1945. During those early days, attention was paid to ensure the progress of education, which made a positive contribution to the welfare of the country.

The steps taken by Korea after the withdrawal of the Japanese were to focus on education, which contributed to successful economic development for the country because of the availability of human capital (Burt and Park 2009). Burt and Park note that, "Immediately following the Japanese surrender and withdrawal from the peninsula, Korea's pent-up demand for education resulted in an explosion of both private and public educational institutions" (p. 284). Koreans were very determined about the future of the country; therefore, they used education to boost their productivity. Korea achieved universal elementary education in the

1950s through 1960s (Burt and Park 2009), which was well carried out in those early days. In contrast, without pressure from global citizens, South Sudan may not achieve universal education, given that the government's inactivity and cultural practices, which place huge burdens in exercising gender equity in education.

So far, little has been done to address equity between the sexes, either in education or the broader job market in South Sudan. UNESCO describes “deep disparities linked to gender and inequalities between states” (UNESCO–IIEP 2011, p. 2) in the newest nation. Currently, education is one of the concerns and the top issue among the Sudanese community, the international community, and the NGOs in general. Yet, females continue to be confined to the duties of the household, which leaves little time for studying. Opinions about the need to change gender inequality have varied, but there have been times, for example during civil war periods in other countries, when the constraints of girls was diminished due to disruptions caused by violence, lack of safety, lack of adequate government support, and lack of sufficient infrastructure.

For instance, “Situations of emergency change the dynamics of gender—dynamics that may be reinforced or challenged in the classroom—through role models, curriculum and teaching methods” (UNESCO 2010, p. 33). It was overwhelmingly known that education was profoundly affected by the civil war, so South Sudanese have sought asylum in foreign countries like Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and other East African countries where they later had access to education, irrespective of their gender. Refugee girls navigated through the educational systems because they were exposed to United Nations schools and foreign teachers who were well educated scholars, particularly women. Consequently, this has been identified as one of the steps of progress made by females outside of their country.

Now that the South Sudanese are returning to their former homes, creating a mass movement of people back to South Sudan, opportunities for girls which were available under the NGOs to IDPs or in refugee camps in foreign countries, will no longer exist. However, prioritizing EFA is highly needed, as many children are returning from foreign refugee camps. These needs were predicted by various NGOs who were involved with the refugees in foreign countries. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, said that “Education is one of the most vital foundations for a human development take-off in South Sudan—and the time to put those foundations in place is right now” (UNESCO–IIEP 2011, p. 1). South Sudan is not an exception to the pattern forged by countries emerging from long civil wars. These poor countries, including the new nation, which emerged from conflict, faced numbers of constraints as they embarked on social and economic reconstruction. Unfortunately, South Sudan is among the top countries that are struggling with education, development, economic, and security issues (UNESCO 2010). According to UNESCO, there are various problems that have jeopardized how education is provided, so a lot of room needs to be created in the South Sudan educational system for females.

Below are some examples provided by UNESCO that are affecting this new country. The equitable education learning opportunities are considered important tools for the country to be rebuilt. UNESCO (2011a, p. 6) has identified EFA in South Sudan as a better way for the country to secure the development and build a strong economy:

While progress in education will inevitably be influenced by developments in other areas—including child and maternal health, poverty reduction, economic growth and security—education itself has a crucial bearing on prospects for peace, productivity and progress in public health. Without the expansion of broad-based, equitable learning opportunities, South Sudan will not generate the economic dynamism—or produce the doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs—needed to build shared prosperity and advance human development.

Since signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, South Sudan has still experienced security concerns. Education in general is under threat; given the intensity of violence, fear continues to affect school attendance. Girls remain particularly vulnerable because the system itself is not law-abiding to protect or educate them. While the government is purposeful in developing the country, it failed to identify EFA as an important policy that would enhance the new country through economic stability.

Thomas and Yan (2008, p. 34) describe concerns regarding development: “There is also a renewed concern over unequal opportunities as both the UNDP (2005) and the World Bank (2006) argue that the distribution of opportunities is key to development.” South Sudan continues to undervalue its own citizens by failing to distribute opportunities, which has led to the underdevelopment of the country. This gendered system, where females are not considered useful human capital, has unfortunately hindered the country’s development. If South Sudan had followed the opposite course, providing open opportunities to obtain formal education, it is likely their citizens would experience better jobs and personal economic stability, leading to an improved situation for the country at large.

Exploring this problem further, without schooling there are fewer employment opportunities available for the uneducated, especially female, population. Those without qualification, the majority of whom will be female, would not be able to seek jobs that require education of some kind. Thomas and Yan (2008, p. 41) continue, “However, inequality in education reflects not only uneven abilities but also uneven opportunities (i.e., access to schooling).” This situation is evident currently in South Sudan with regard to extremely low representation among government employees. However, the problem is compounded by the fact that even with a university degree, employment opportunities remain limited.

Even though the government is willing to reform how education is provided, there has been less focus on gender equity. They may have been excused for a short while because of the recent wars, but now that more than half a decade has passed and the enrollment of girls continues to lag behind that of boys, that excuse appears less credible.

UNESCO has determined that only 37 percent of those enrolled in primary school are girls. Since boys overwhelm girls in their enrollment, there are no comparison attempts made. The numbers are worse at the secondary level, with the disparity becoming more extreme; only 27 percent of secondary students are female (UNESCO 2011, p. 3). Given this poor record, South Sudan might learn from the Korean experience of eliminating illiteracy after wartime (Thomas and Yan 2008, p. 41). Korea did not appear to experience bias in equalizing their education, which in turn created a more equal distribution of opportunities, leading to enhanced development.

There are varying findings among NGOs regarding literacy rates in South Sudan, which may be a function of small changes in the country since the war ended. For example, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) found a female functional illiteracy rate of 88 percent (Guvele et al. 2012, p. 9) not far from the 92 percent reported by UNESCO (2011b). According to Cesar Guvele and his colleagues (2012, p. 9), “Southern Sudan is second only to Niger in adult literacy rate (24%). Adult female illiteracy rate is 88%. Three of every four adults are illiterate and only one of every 10 female adults is literate.” Similarly, Aruai (2003) found that with school enrollment and attendance at 30 percent in South Sudan, only 26 percent are girls.

These figures are for the country as a whole; however, there are also regional differences. Girls make up 37 percent of pupils in Equatoria, 27 percent in Upper Nile, and only 16 percent in

the Bahr El Ghazal region. Generally, the higher the grade level the lower the percentage of girls enrolled. While the girls make up of 29 percent of pupils in Grade 1, that number falls to 21 percent in Grade 8. In terms of the relative gender gap (RGG), overall there are 2.8 boys for every girl enrolled, 3.8 boys for every girl in Grade 8. This is an absolute gender gap across the three regions of South Sudan. According to UNESCO (2010, pp. 31-33):

In most cultures, discrimination against girls becomes more apparent as children get older—girls are less likely to stay in school after the early years of primary education and, in some places, may be subject to early marriage, which generally results in their dropping out of school.

The susceptibility of females has allowed them to be easily manipulated, mistreated, abused, excluded socially, politically, and economically. Young girls have such minimal access to primary and secondary education that few people have even been concerned about it in this country, crippled by a male-dominated culture and wars. Girls are less capable of withstanding the deprivation of their rights, such as rape and harassment, which are often the cause of why so many girls drop out of school. As UNESCO (2011, p. 1) noted:

Young girls in South Sudan face extreme disadvantages in education. Girls are less likely to enter school, more likely to drop out, and there are just 400 in the last grade of secondary education. Today, a young girl in South Sudan is three times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than to reach grade 8.

Most of the departure from education occurs at the primary level. In 2005, they were approximately 500 females, in a population of 9 million, who had finished their primary education (Breitenborn and UNICEF 2005).

Michael Brophy (2003) looked at figures provided by the School Baseline Assessment (SBA) and the Secretariat, showing that 60 percent of all pupils are in the first two grades in South Sudan. Brophy went on to state, “Only 12% of pupils reach the upper grades and less than 1% of pupils are in Grade 8” (p. 3). His data do not identify the proportion of girls and boys, but

he did find out other relevant statistics pertaining to primary education in South Sudan's enrollment:

Taking the UNICEF estimate of 1.06 million school-age children and the SBA estimate of a 30% enrollment rate indicates that currently only 0.3% of school age children in southern Sudan complete the eight year primary school cycle. Only 12% of children proceed past Grade 2 and less than 4% progress past Grade 4. (p. 3)

There is a consistency in findings between the UNICEF and SBA in terms of enrollment figures, and they are presumably low due to the war. Again, the proportions of girls and boys enrolling are yet to be identified in their research, but Brophy provides some information. He acknowledges that in southern Sudan, there are still issues of bias against the education of girls due to cultural norms: "In spite of a number of attempts to promote gender sensitization, there remains a widespread belief that when sending children to school, girls should have a lower priority than boys" (Brophy 2003, p. 4). South Sudanese girls are controlled based on traditional mechanisms, which place them at the very lowest level of the ladder. Given the array of problems facing them, there are few chances for girls to obtain an education from Grades 1 through 3, due to environmental influences. South Sudan is not different from the rest of the African nations in this respect (Aruai 2003), so every aspect of girls'/women's social lives is often controlled by males. This male dominance continues into the educational realm.

Because of their cultural, social and traditional isolation, females have less to contribute financially to the functioning of society. Rather than being provided with an equal education and opportunities, they are placed in a stagnant, peripheral role or status to function within the household, which also serves to keep them away from men before marriage. These limited options for girls also curb their ambitions; completing primary school is literally a dream for many girls because they have no way to access schools. Education is also seen as potentially

invalidating their attraction as a wife, which comes with a high financial price; the sale of many cows is necessary for attendance at secondary school, and this is usually only done for sons. As a result, girls leave school without completion even of the primary level

The low educational rate of girls creates a shortage further down the educational pipeline; a decade ago, only 7 percent of teachers were women (World Bank 2002). This has improved more recently to 14 percent, but the majority of women are in urban areas, which does not alleviate the gender gap in rural areas (Eissa 2010). This lack of female role models will have lasting, negative impact on girls' enrollment and educational success, and could be addressed if the government's educational policies extended to female teachers. According to Jackie Kirk (2006, p. 1),

There is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girls' enrollment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In countries where there are more or less equal numbers of male and female primary teachers, there is close to gender parity in student intake.

Empowering girls to overcome challenges could be increased by the greater availability of women teachers—especially those who are well informed about gender bias and oriented towards girls' success. Women teachers would validate the importance of education irrespective of gender. Women teachers who are determined and strong administrators can create an outstanding impression, inspiring young girls to obtain an education. Kirk also notes that this positive impact is not singular to girls: “Studies have shown a positive impact from women teachers on girls' (and boys') achievement. A female role model can support and encourage girls to successfully complete their studies and maybe even continue studying to become teachers, themselves” (p. 2). This learning through imitation is powerful for children, so the role of women in education has become increasingly important. Although the provision of more female teachers is likely to be successful at improving gender equity, it may also create more cultural problems

since women may no longer be obligated to perform their domestic duties once they acquire an education.

It is clear that parents, and fathers in particular, are manipulated by the objectification of girls, often treating them as wealth, based on the cultures' values. Aruai (2003) notes that the dowry plays a major role, placing girls at risk and unable to obtain an education. Due to these practices the ultimate price paid for a girl is a highly debated topic between male family members and the husband, who is paying a "bride price," usually in a large number of cattle, for his future wife. Parents, especially fathers, and brothers are concerned that daughters allowed to go to school will be exposed to boys and receive the attention of other students and teachers, most of whom are male. Such exposure and attention could ultimately lead to a girl becoming pregnant, which would prevent her from receiving a large dowry.

Traditionally, girls have a further economic value in terms of their labor, such as fetching water, cooking, cleaning and minding babies and younger children. Consequently, dowries are given as an exchange of labor. Commonly, elder daughters are kept at home to help their mothers either go to work in the fields or trade at the market. Meanwhile, boys' tasks usually are to look after the cattle or attend school, so boys are hardly ever called on to perform household tasks. Additionally, once girls get married, they are seen as belonging to their husband and so not worth the economic investment in education. Therefore, parents believe it is not in their interest to educate girls since they are not going to be beneficial to the family (see Brophy 2003).

Theoretically, once married, women could attend school. However, it is improbable that the husbands would allow them to do so because it is believed that women should stay at home and tend to the family without the interference of other obligations, such as education. Additionally, it is likely that married women would become pregnant, which precludes the

possibility of continuing their education even if they were attending school with the permission of their husbands. In 2005, one fifth of all girls had a child (GOSS and UNICEF 2006).

The cultural bias extends even to how the few females enrolled in schools are treated. Male teachers, who represent 93 percent of educators, contribute little time helping girls who are struggling with their assignments because they view girls' education negatively (Aruai 2003). School administrators are not capable of holding teachers accountable for not contributing to equal and fair teaching to girls (GOSS and UNICEF 2006). It is also looked upon as inappropriate when girls receive education from male teachers. Indeed, among many tribes in South Sudan, girls are treated unfairly because of the expectations of parents, siblings, relatives, extended families and of course the community as a whole. Although the objectification of women is not put into words, it has become the cultural norm to do this and reduce females' intellectuality.

Over the course of the civil war, girls were engaged in life-threatening activities, and they were easily exposed to different experiences, which were not necessarily education related. Girls who grew up during the war were far more vulnerable because they were exposed to sexual abuse, rape, kidnapping, and trafficking. These mistreatments happened even to those living in the IDP or refugee camps, where the UN provided provide protection and free education. Women who were border dwellers benefitted from neighboring countries educationally and became feminist activists because of their access to education. However, these activists have not been very vocal in speaking out about the isolation of females in the South Sudanese educational system.

Lack of effective activism and lack of concern about girls' education in general has created a situation where policies that are part of the constitution are disregarded when it comes

to equality for both sexes in education The Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) is aware of the need for greater equality, however:

Inclusion and social integration is a salient feature in our present reforms. The desire to achieve full coverage of the education system to accommodate all children of school age in their multicultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds led to the adoption of certain measures. (Brophy 2003, p. 9)

These positive intentions are not carried through into practice. The failure to address EFA means that a gender gap persists at the basic educational level in certain parts of the country. Some findings indicate that South Sudan has so successfully reversed the gender gap, that there are more girls attending school than boys (FMoE 2011, p. 11). The FMoE stated that the gender gap has been reversed in the southern states, but no scholarly literature has yet verified this. However, ICARDA has different figures rejecting the aforementioned numbers, “only 500 girls finish primary school each year while 2000 boys finish” (Guvele et al. 2012, p. 9).

Figures documented by various NGOs also do not show this to be the case, which is why they continue to play a pivotal role in pushing for gender parity in education, especially at the primary level, as evidenced by EFA. UNICEF advocates for children’s education in South Sudan through their operations on the ground (Breitenborn 2005).

The efforts of UNICEF and other NGOs focusing on educating all children fly in the face of the cultural ideologies of some in South Sudan, who see it as a destruction of their system. However, the NGOs see what the South Sudanese who wish to retain their traditions do not: that educating all children will benefit the new nation in the end to sustain and build better economic stability.

The figures provided earlier indicate how unequally education has been granted in South Sudan before and after the civil war. Without a doubt, this is the major problem facing the country. Instead of integrating children and giving them equal chances to receive often primary

and secondary education, the South Sudanese persistently encourage division or disintegration among children. One newer organization is the Girls' Education Movement (GEM), which works to "[promote] education through mentors and peers, and [reinforce] the empowerment of women in Southern Sudan. This is an important step in helping creating a more stable, economically viable and gender equal society" (GEM 2004, p. 9). However, the GEM recommendations have not been reevaluated and reconsidered to increase the likelihood of helping girls gain self-efficacy in continuing with their studies.

UNICEF GEM aimed to boost girls' attendance, but their recommendations were ignored in South Sudan, leading to the continued lack of gender parity in education. GEM proposed measures as follows:

1. The establishment of an administration for girl's education.
2. The establishment of an administration for nomadic education.
3. The establishment of an administration for the education of children with special needs.
4. The inclusion of additional material to the national syllabus to accommodate the particularities of a certain geographical area or groups.
5. The provision of a compressed curriculum to meet the needs of out of school children and the returnees who missed the opportunities of education especially in the post peace period.
6. The present reforms are innovative for some of them have been initiated to respond to the current trends in the field of education such as EFA, MDG's, combating epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and the closure of the digital gap. In addition to this, the reforms include the use of technology to improve the performance of the education system in such areas as examinations (the introduction of the item bank), research, distance teaching and planning. (FMoE 2004, pp. 9-10)

The FMoE notes that before peace was established, the intake ratio (IR) for 2003 was 67.1 percent for both males and females combined, 71.3 percent for males and 62.7 percent for females. The gender-parity index (GPI) was 0.88, indicating a narrowing of the gap compared to 2001, at which time it was 0.80 (FMoE 2004). The GPI is "an attempt to indicate the extent to which boys and girls are equally present at different levels in the education system" (Unterhalter

and Oommen 2008, p. 541). Another positive point that could have an impact on girls was Usman Khalid's (2008, p. 6) statement regarding the positive contribution of parents to their children's education:

The results provide evidence that parental education has significant positive impact on children's education. However, mother's education exerts greater impact on girl's schooling. Therefore, public investment in female schooling and adult female education will lead to reduction in gender gap in schooling and ultimately, in earnings.

Despite all the efforts, girls continue to comprise the majority of out-of-school children, and women are the majority of the adult illiterate, particularly in South Sudan. As long as females continue to be denied the right to education, EFA and MDGs will not be met, the fundamental human rights will not be realized, and the key indicators for poverty reduction will not improve significantly (Khalid 2008). Since the goals of the MDGs were meant to transform the way education is to be provided to children at the primary level worldwide, South Sudan has been pushed to adopt and accept the obligations. However, in my opinion the idea falls on deaf ears in underdeveloped countries due to governmental corruption and a lack of transparency. As a result there is a lack of coordination and execution. Additionally, the strong cultural norms have further brought this idea of EFA to a deadlock in conjunction with the failure of the government. According to the MDGs Nancy Birdsall, Ruth Levine, Amina Ibrahim (2005, p. 35), "Global and regional primary school completion rates have improved since 1990, but many countries are far off track for meeting the goal, and gender disparities remain." In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries' resisting the agreement to universalize primary education to all children regardless of their gender and their families' socio-economic status is threatening the MDGs.

The gender gap continues to remain questionable due to the terms attached to the quality of education provided to children. The world is becoming concerned about the well-being of

girls' education, so UN partners are taking the idea of equal education seriously to boost their educational attainment. Based on the UN findings, "Intensifying partnerships for girls' education" are now officially taking better direction, due to UNICEF, which is a major role player in making sure girls have access to education and in correcting some form of isolation based on gender criteria. However, regardless of this enthusiasm, there is a lack of consistency in keeping up with the goals of MDGs. Although this idea of EFA is being actively executed in many countries thanks to UNICEF's efforts, many countries are lagging behind, with South Sudan at the bottom. According to the MDGs, "More than 100 million children of primary school age are not in school, with the worst shortfalls in Africa and South Asia. Girls are disproportionately affected, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific, where 83 percent of all out-of-school girls live" (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim 2005, p. 24). These figures reflect the failure of many countries to comply with the 2015 MDGs deadline.

Given the mounting gender gap, South Sudan may need more time to ensure that international policies relating to education are implemented, irrespective of the country's own policies. It is not alone in this situation; many underdeveloped countries are unlikely to impose their own laws to protect children, which is why little progress has been accomplished. India provides a country example of how laws are not always executed as expected in providing protection to children. According to Werner Menski (2006, p. 299), "Indian law has been too soft on the issue of child marriages, which continue to be legally valid all over South Asia today, despite legislative action since the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929."

Countries that lag behind in terms of the implementation of the MDGs cause a high number of girls to suffer educationally. To increase efforts to comply with MDGs, UNICEF

serves as “the lead agency for the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), a group of partners dedicated to achieving gender parity and equality targets in education” (UNICEF 2012). They also support GEM: “UNICEF is a strong supporter as well of the Girls Education Movement (GEM), a grassroots initiative active in countries throughout Africa and officially launched in Uganda in 2001. GEM clubs work to empower girls through education and sensitize communities on the importance of sending every child to school” (UNICEF 2012).

Countries that have not adopted the MDGs thus far have until 2015 to establish concrete foundations to equalize education. However, many of the MDGs advocated in South Sudan do not have a strong enough influence over those who could implement EFA effectively in this new country. For instance, GEM’s aims are to empower girls, but their empowerment of girls seems to have less strength to make girls thrive in a male-dominated culture because of the strategies they have adopted to functioning as a cohesive movement. According to the Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim (2005, p. 24):

To reach the Goals, policymakers in developing countries need to take action to bring out-of-school children into the education system and to reform institutions in the education sector, from schools to ministries of education. While primary responsibility for education lies with the governments of developing countries, the international community—particularly bilateral and multilateral financing entities—must live up to key commitments already made, providing much-needed financial and political support for progressive and positive change.

The UN suggests protocols to help underdeveloped countries act swiftly to reach obligations by bringing education to those who lack the resources to sustain their academic progress without falling back. Now, the failure to implement and incorporate the MDGs policies is to be blamed on individual countries.

Given these failures to comply with the MDGs, how can these goals be enforced? Girls are not involved in social movements such as feminism to empower themselves to make the

public aware of what is affecting the female population. Unfortunately, girls with no educational background may not participate in an open dialogue to express their opinions regarding oppression in education. Even though these uneducated females are uninformed about their rights, they should not be treated as alienated; they all have a sense of belonging, whether at the macro or micro level.

2.2 ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

Given the multitude of the problems facing girls, such as poverty and the unsafe environment itself, the retention of students remains unstable and is one of the main problems affecting school attendance rates. Maintaining attendance when there are many problems creating uncertainty for a vulnerable population is not easy. Girls tend to question whether schools are the right place to be given the inherent insecurity. Safety is their major concern and the greatest cause of departure from school. Internal clashes among tribes is one of the greatest causes of such insecurity and has harmed school attendance as children are displaced from their residences. This prevents them from going to school, and the normal provision of education is disrupted (UNESCO–IIEP 2011). The fact that girls are usually targeted by some of these tribal conflicts led UNESCO–IIEP to demand that the government must deal with tribal conflicts so that attendance can improve.

In 2010, UNESCO assessed primary and secondary schools in South Sudan. They found that in South Sudan, there are seven girls for every ten boys in primary school and in secondary school there are five girls for every ten boys (UNESCO 2010). They also found that there were more than 426,000 children in Grade 1, but only 117,000 in Grade 5 and 22,000 in Grade 8. The dropout rate of girls cannot be ruled out here given the low GPI. Indeed, for every 20 girls

entering Grade 1 of primary school in South Sudan, just eleven make it to Grade 3 and one reaches Grade 8 (UNESCO 2010).

Although schools do not cost a lot, the average family still cannot afford fees and uniforms. The distance of schools from residences is another reason for some students—particularly girls dropping out, due to insecurity on their way to school and from school. As UNESCO–IIEP (2011, p. 3) summarizes, “School cost, distance from home and traditions are the main obstacles to children attending school and a major cause of drop-out.” In most cases, school cost should not be the main cause of dropping out because many schools are being funded by NGOs or the government. The third barrier is that girls have domestic duties that do not allow them sufficient time to attend school.

UNESCO’s (2011b, p. 4) International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) “gives special attention to working with countries faced with the challenges of emergencies and reconstruction, countries which are farthest away from achieving the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development goals (MDG).” UNESCO continues to see girls ostracized from education; therefore, they are working with South Sudanese to make sure their education is moving towards the MDGs.

Correcting gender inequality in education is a significant step to stability in the country, but the task requires a lot of work, as the Director-General of UNESCO emphasized:

It is hard to overstate the scale of the challenge but independence brings with it an unprecedented opportunity to build a good quality education system. The people of South Sudan cannot afford to see that opportunity squandered—and neither can the international community. (UNESCO 2011b, p. 6)

Indeed, it is an overwhelming task, given that South Sudan is starting over on a number of issues associated with education. The enormity of the necessary changes means that the country has made no progress towards the three most important parts of MDGs or EFA policies. In fact, the

most important part of the MDGs—gender parity—is being contradicted in the new nation. At the time of UNESCO’s follow-up in 2005, it found failure to achieve its goals. Therefore, they have reiterated these three important goals that came out of the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, to which some countries were resistant:

Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls...have access to, and complete, free and compulsory education of good quality.

Goal 4: Achieving 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women.

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on encouraging girls’ full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education. (UNESCO 2005, pp. 1-2)

If the countries with a stronger economy were not doing anything to intervene and implement these policies, it is only to be expected that doing so will be even more challenging for many countries like South Sudan, which has only just gained independence on July 9, 2011, and which is currently struggling with everything from education to its economy.

Brophy (2003) explains why the South Sudanese education system is uncommitted to tackling gender inequality in education. The fragile South Sudanese education system seems to undermine the importance of educational policies for females in the entire country. Consequently, the results are approximately 25 percent of what was anticipated at the conference that brought all countries together to address gender inequalities in education.

This assessment was conducted before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was signed in 2005 by the South Sudan and the Khartoum government. Before the Peace deal, women’s and girls’ issues had little attention from the international community and NGOs; this has been rectified since the Peace Agreement. To find out if there were changes made since 2003, USAID compared female enrollment and drop outs between 2003 and 2010. They found

out that enrollment has climbed higher, but dropout rates have not changed. The main reason girls drop out of school is water. If water is not available, girls have to drop out to fetch water from far areas, leaving no time for their education (USAID 2010). They noted that “providing water at schools increases attendance & improves sanitation & health of students and teachers” (USAID 2010, p.1). The duties assigned to females in general have a negative impact on their lives besides school, and the violence they encounter while attending school is remarkable.

2.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALES AND EDUCATION

In the worst-case scenario, violence against females in the country has not only weakened education, but it has also weakened women and girls mentally and physically. Over the course of the conflict, females were in a critical situation. However, even after the conflict, the levels of violence have not changed. The violence inflicted on females in learning environments is severe—especially marriage-related violence. Violence among South Sudanese communities and families is high. It is normal in these communities for a girl to be allowed to marry at a very young age because of her dowry. The years of conflict and extreme consistent poverty in the country have brought more focus on dowries and early marriage as economic measures for survival for the South Sudanese (USAID 2010). The dowries outweigh the education and safety of young girls, given the poverty people are experiencing after the civil war. Even if girls are resentful to marry, parents usually insist, pushing their daughters into unwanted marriages.

Many families arrange the marriages of their daughters of 11-13 years of age and even younger without an open dialogue with the girl. While tribal subcultures may vary, the practices of early marriage, arranged and forced, are similar. USAID, on the ground in South Sudan, has

found the practice of early marriage widespread and deeply embedded in the culture of Sudan as a whole. However, the practices in the south were provoked by the use of the dowry, regardless of the age of the girl. Although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18, there is no legal action taken on those who disregard the law either intentionally or through ignorance (USAID 2010). In fact, various agencies, involved in workshops on child protection have often encountered people's knowledge pertaining to the legal age for marriage, yet the law continues to be ignored. The majority of the times, young girls have little contribution to the choice of their spouse and this has led in a number of cases to girls refusing or failing to comply with parents or their brothers in support of the marriage.

In recent years there have been cases of girls being tortured to death because they did not acknowledge the marriage into which they were forced. The fulfillment of parents' and siblings' demands has taken lives in two places in South Sudan. Because of cultural expectations, girls cannot question their parents' decision regarding their arranged marriage. Such violence against women and girls is another root cause of low female attendance.

Forced and early marriage, rape, domestic violence and trafficking have been identified by USAID as among the most disturbing problems in South Sudan, and also as a violation of girls' and women's rights (USAID 2010). This violation of girls' rights interferes with and can ultimately destroy their progress in education. These acts were exercised over the course of the civil war but still continue today. According to USAID, these issues "were serious problems throughout the conflict years and persist in peacetime" (USAID 2010, p.14).

Forced or early marriage is considered part of the culture, so the South Sudanese community is comfortable with them as a form of marriage.

In the past few years, dowry prices have become extremely expensive. Dowry payment is one of the bases of household economics in the South; therefore, the

families look to the girl child to bring dowry wealth into the household. The families of men and boys seeking wives often resort to criminal activity, commonly armed cattle raiding, to pay the dowry when no other options exist. Dowry is connected to early marriage, but it is equally related to lifestyle and the power realized by owning more cows than a neighbor, for instance. (Power and status are measured by the number of cattle owned; the practice is deeply rooted in the cultures of southern Sudan and may be very difficult to change.) Marriage involves the community as well as the families of the bride and groom. (USAID 2010, p.15)

For instance, a girl may be ambushed for the purpose of marriage by a group of men on her way to or from school. Schools that are located far away from villages place many girls in particular jeopardy. These distances and the potential for violence against girls associated with them contribute significantly to the high number of female dropouts. However, parents' contributions to their child's marriage is not perceived by them as violence against their daughters, yet under the CRC, it is a violation of human rights to force a child to get married at an early age.

Therefore, gender equity in education will remain a problem as long as "many families arrange the marriages of their daughters of 11-13 years old, and even younger" (USAID 2010, p. 15). These marriage practices violate girls' rights and international laws, which were meant to protect the rights of children at an early age. The common disregard for the minimum age of marriage law stems from the need to bolster the economic situation of families, so girls' vulnerabilities are exploited by the use of dowries, as mentioned earlier: "Dowry payment is one of the bases of household economics in the South, and families look to the girl child to bring dowry wealth into the household" (USAID 2010, p.15). Given such expectations of families about their daughters, there is little chance for education to be a priority.

USAID has tried to increase education as a priority for girls, and therefore improve gender equity, but, as has been demonstrated, there is still much to be done. In South Sudan, USAID proposed funds to be appropriated purposely for equalizing education. These funds were

meant to reach out to girls and boys who are not in school and to alleviate the most common barriers.

One measure where USAID's money has been well spent is supporting more female teachers. UNESCO (2011a, p. 19) notes the need to provide resources to recruit and train female teachers:

Gender disparities in the teacher workforce reinforce gender disparities in school. Closing these disparities and achieving the goal of 25% of female teachers at the primary school level will require targeted interventions, including a scaled-up bursary program for girls in secondary school and the creation of an incentives program to encourage female entry to teacher training.

As noted earlier and by Kirk (2006), women teachers can be excellent role models for girls in school who have the potential to achieve academically, but need to see that their ambitions are realistic. Kirk believes that "From a gender equality perspective, empowering women as teachers is critical to ensuring that the experience of being a teacher is a positive one for them, and that their work has a sustained impact on gender relations in the community and in society, at large" (p.1). This strategy of including women teachers in the educational system to boost girls' enrollment and retention is important. However, as she points out, the low female literacy rates in South Sudan present few choices available for incorporating women teachers.

Naturally, it is always important to include men and boys in the effort to ensure that both sexes can co-exist in the education environment, so working with this larger population in the educational system presents a starting point for equalization efforts. As Michael Kaufman (2004, p. 20) writes, "If we do not effectively reach men and boys, many of our efforts will be either thwarted or simply ignored." Forming alliances to fight injustice is an important tool to correct gender concerns in school environments, therefore, males, and females should work together to understand and enforce equal rights, irrespective of gender. However, it is not uncommon for

male leaders to say things for their political interests that they may not put into action in the long run. According to Kaufman (2004, p. 20), “At best, males leaders will pay lip service to the goals of women’s rights, but these goals will not be fully integrated into local, national, and international priorities.” Still, this is not enough to isolate male administrators from gender-related issues in or outside of school, because without males being part of the gender equation, greater damage may persist. While providing female role models in the classroom may be the best choice, the lack of qualified women suggests that the next best action is more plausible—for men to ensure girls are protected and valued through their participation in the school. Men can also play an important role in protecting women from violence, since without security for female students, female teacher role models alone are unlikely to enact change.

There is not only a paucity of female teachers. UNESCO (2011) notes that the shortage of trained teachers in South Sudan is a mounting concern and has led to both girls and boys dropping out because the teachers who are currently teaching have no qualifications. The ratio of pupils to qualified teachers averages 100:1, but it is double that in some states in South Sudan. Girls remain disadvantaged as a primary problem in the hands of the education system administrators. However, UNESCO, as an advocate for those who are voiceless, is working hard to ensure that the South Sudanese take progressive steps to promote gender equity in their education through equal opportunities in the hiring process. This will allow women to have a chance to be part of the job market and to be role models for girls.

Laws mandating minimum marital age, the protection of women, equal hiring opportunities, qualifications of teachers, and other factors that influence equal educational opportunities are positive in intent. However, without the government’s desire and ability to enforce them, little will change. Deng (2003, p. 17) argues:

While there is enough policy rhetoric about girls' education, it is important to practically address the factors related to the demand for girls' labor. While various surveys have generally shown the high girls participation in domestic chores, the most pressing demand for girls' labor is caring for their younger siblings as well as orphans, neighbors and other young children. This demand for caring for younger siblings and children has considerably increased during the civil war as adults and particularly women have become more engaged in livelihood activities than during pre-war periods.

Practical support from government agencies may allow more girls to attend school. To maximize the potential effect; however, these girls need more school choice. Good schools tend to be private, meaning that they charge fees, which generally presents an insurmountable challenge to girls from poor families. Therefore, to ensure that quality education is provided to all students regardless of their gender or socioeconomic status, the government may need to consider some policies to exempt fees. Private schools in South Sudan tend to have certain things public schools do not, such as books, qualified teachers, protection, and better infrastructure. Government-supported access to private schools could have a profound and positive effect on girls' educational experiences.

South Sudan has many options to address education inequalities by using methods adopted in other countries, such as South Africa, where fees were exempt for poor. Crouch, Gustafsson and Lavado (2008, p. 468) suggest that "the fee-setting process must take into account the obligation of schools to exempt pupils from poorer families according to a national fee exemptions norms." The vast majority of South Sudanese families are living in poverty, with some families living on less than a dollar a day. Thus, policies exempting children from poor families from paying fees would affect a large portion of the population. Removal of economic barriers to a private education would likely increase girls' attendance.

2.4 GIRLS' RIGHTS IN SOUTH SUDAN

Girls have few rights in South Sudan due to the traditional culture. As a result their educational achievement suffers because society denies them status as normal citizens. For example, instead of protecting their values and rights, parents arrange their children's marriage for the economic betterment of the family. This treatment of girls contravenes Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states, "Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Convention on The Right of the Child 1989 Art 12).

NGOs and other members of the international community have taken rights of children seriously and are working hard to persuade many countries to adapt these policies. Doing so is challenging since "culturalcentrists" view these moves as the replacement of the existing cultures with modern norms (Edmunds 2001, p. 62). Investing in every child's education is viewed as a destruction of the system by many who hold a mainstream or culturalcentrist perspective in South Sudan. My argument is based on a cultural ideological critique of this perspective. I feel that those who adhere to this perspective fail to notice that educating all children will benefit the new nation toward eventual sustainability and help build strengthen the economy.

Girls become vulnerable to forced and arranged marriages and other injustices at an early age, due to the norms of the culture, and are less likely to obtain an education. Brown (2006) notes that, "The situation in South Sudan is unique in terms of gender inequalities and violation of girls' rights to education. South Sudan has proportionately fewer girls going to school than any country in the world" (p.20). South Sudan has failed to adopt the philosophy underlying EFA, the goal for the MDGs, which requires every country to provide primary education for all

children. Although mandated international law, South Sudan has not made much progress in this regard.

2.5 THE GENDER GAP IN EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Suad Ibrahim Eissa (2010) argues that the task of bridging the gender gap by providing equal levels of educational opportunities is not enough. Equal enrollment in different levels of education does not mean parity has been achieved. To reach gender parity in education, some measures need to be fulfilled, such as the protection of girls, the provision of sanitation, and other elements that interfere with their educational progress. Gender disparity will continue as long as children from poor families are needed to assist with agricultural or domestic work. Since sending children to school is a financial burden for poor families, generally only boys are sent to school. Culturally, girls are assumed to be intellectually inferior to boys, a belief that makes achieving gender parity very difficult in South Sudan.

2.6 EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

The lack of inclusion of all females in education has hampered girls across the country (USAID 2007). South Sudan educational problems have gained the attention of the American people through USAID's efforts to ensure girls get equal access to education. The cooperation between the government of South Sudan and USAID has launched a five-year, US\$6.5 million Gender

Equity through Education program in Juba, Southern Sudan (Miller 2007). This program aims to encourage nearly 7,000 females to complete secondary school and become teachers.

The acquisition of basic skills in primary education and hopefully in secondary education and beyond is critical to the country's development. Gender bias in any learning environment is one of the driving forces of why female citizens are behind in education in South Sudan. Inclusion in education is the biggest concern for girls, the international community, and NGOs. Moreover, it has been seen that the education of girls is one of the most effective means of combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Achieving gender equity in education is not an easy task to be accomplished through education alone. However, prioritizing issues related to gender in educational policy could boost women and girls' educational attainment at the primary level. The government of Sudan implemented such educational policy, but it failed to address education as a whole and gender equality.

2.7 ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Few efforts have been made with regard to access to education in South Sudan because of the many issues stemming from the civil wars. The governments of Sudan and the SPLM /SPLA were not committed to ensuring all children having access to education. Over the course of the civil wars, there were few schools, so access to education for all children was never prioritized, let alone girls' issues in education. In the years since, girls' access has hardly been addressed due to various hurdles. The IDPs camps were constantly evacuated as the violence became intense, meaning that education was difficult to implement for any children, irrespective of gender. However, the SPLM/SPLA has guidelines or policies designated to address access to education

by some of the children who were uprooted by the civil war, yet these policies were not fully recognized or implemented. Even though these policies existed specifically to address access to education in general, they were disregarded under the SPLM/SPLA leadership. Policy implementation was never considered mandatory under the rebel moment and no one was penalized for failing to execute these educational policies. Under the leadership of the SPLM/SPLA, there were many plausible excuses of why policies were disregarded, such as wars and the distance of schools from villages.

Now that South Sudan has been recognized as a nation, there are new regulations or laws that will help to ensure girls have access to education, but these have not yet been perceived well by the people. There is hope that these policies will help in making education mandatory and accessible for female students.

Another problem affecting access is the lack of roads. It affects girls' enrollment, which has been a major issue for the country as a whole. Building roads to connect a village with schools has been identified as one of the things that will increase girls' enrollment. In fact, there are poor roads available, movement along these roads are limited because of land mines that were planted during the civil war. The current available roads need renovation to improve the movement of people and to increase access to education at the furthest institutions, especially for girls. Given that South Sudan has recently emerged from its lengthy civil war, roads, which were built by Britain during the colonial era, are for the most part rendered useless due to the large number of land mines that still exist. The current condition of roads should not be underestimated among many of the issues affecting education in the new nation. Many of the land mines, which were planted during the war years, continue to hinder the movement of people and goods, which has often isolated various villages' populations and this includes school

children. This has limited access to schools in many of the areas throughout South Sudan. Many children are learning through adversity as land mines are yet to be discovered and detonated by experts. The prevalence of land mines is a lasting tragedy and reality that exists in day-to-day life many years after the war.

2.8 EMPOWERMENT AND ADVOCACY

Engaging in advocacy takes a particular skill and personality. Those who are well empowered and informed about relevant social problems are more likely to stand their grounds and argue persuasively. There are many ways in which individuals are empowered, such as through formal education, role models, or workshops. The revitalization of society becomes imminent if people are aware of the problems, and the growing momentum this brings may help to strengthen their involvement. Such empowerment is inspirational for those who are willing to accept change.

Generally, social problems such as gender disparity in education, sexual discrimination in the job market, and other forms of discrimination can empower those who believe in social justice for all. Since some view females' education disparagingly, advocates see their role as informing others about their rights and envisioning positive possibilities. This strategy can empower those who believe that there are social contracts between the government and the people. Citizens abide by the laws, and the government in return ensures no violence is done to them. In such a situation, however, a lack of advocates could further disadvantage the voiceless. To prevent this, advocates and activists bring to the fore the rights of those who are oppressed through various methods such as rallies, workshops, and public speaking. This can increase public awareness and mobilize and empower new advocates or activists. The empowerment and

advocating of females has a long way to go in South Sudan, because females are less inspired to act against the violence done to them and their exclusion from the job market, political participations, and social, and economic contributions. Prioritizing education has been identified as an agent for change in societies where there is a strong bias against females in education.

Education has empowered many feminists or activists around the world, but many South Sudanese women have not had the education that will make them likely to engage in the issues that matter in their lives. Even the well-educated seem to minimize their participation because they have been labeled and victimized due to widespread beliefs regarding female intellectual inferiority. In addition, due to fear of retaliation or some form of repercussions from men, women's collaborations are weakened such that only the brave can speak out in an open dialogue. Female activism continues to be explored by various societies where men subjugate women.

Leila E. Villaverde (2008, p. 23) has described the "socially constructed process by which women are portrayed as decoration, dependent on and inferior to men. In contrast, men [are] portrayed as strong warriors, stern, proud, and in control." Interestingly, men in positions of power have distorted what it means to be a warrior in society. In controlling women, men have somehow placed themselves in a position of greater disadvantage. However, women and men working together are empowered by the common cause.

Men's participation can empower other men who are well informed about gender problems in education or other social issues. Well informed females may react to social issues facing women in general, but they tend to speak less about social problems. The feminists or activists who work for the voiceless know little about the dogmatic system that has excluded females from education and the job market in South Sudan. However, there are scholars who

believe it is very important to include females' teachers as the prime examples for young girls who are less motivated about education due to unpleasant school environments from both male teachers and male students. To prevent female students from feeling out of place, Kirk (2006, p. 1) believes that "From a gender equality perspective, empowering women as teachers is critical to ensuring that the experience of being a teacher is a positive one for them, and that their work has a sustained impact on gender relations in the community and in society, at large."

Empowering women to be involved in school management committees and other ways to support girls' education is considered to have a positive impact (UNGEI 2010). Education aims to equip female educators to deal with matters such as violence against women or girls, forced marriage, and gender disparity in education. Another aspect of empowerment is through role modeling, which has been lacking in the South Sudanese education system. The absence of female teachers has been associated with the dearth of empowerment to pursue education or speak out on social issues. Unfortunately, the South Sudanese have misconceptions regarding women teachers. The unavailability of women among school teachers has been proven to be one of the reasons why gender inequality persists in education in South Sudan. It is hard to address these inequalities without women who can empower girls to think beyond gender during elementary or secondary school. The lack of empowerment can be traced to a number of failures on the part of both men and women who are not advocating for the most vulnerable population.

Advocacy as a form of fighting for the social justice to eliminate otherization, oppression, and many other forms of injustices may not be sufficient to create or reform the system such that the inclusiveness of girls in education is taken seriously. It is very important for advocates to fight for equal rights in education and engage the marginalized population in understanding their rights. For example, there are female activists who advocate for females' rights. But usually in

South Sudan these same activists are intimidated by men which often prevents them from being willing to act on or stand up for women's rights. There are many ways men intimidate women, especially using violence. Due to lack of well educated women, there are fewer empowered women to advocate for the rights of females in the country. However, one does not need to be a female to voice social concern and support women. Conditional advocacy can be employed at any time, regardless of how complex it is, but women are less likely to be involved in dangerous dialogue. Advocacy is an important tool because it creates a positive impact as people become mindful about social problems facing others.

Some advocates are motivated to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves, because they believe that what mainstream society stands for does not reflect reality. Villaverde (2008) made this point, stating, "The first element is 'equal rights' consciousness, where a 'subordinated group' might argue that their differences—for which they have been assigned inferior status—are only in appearance, not reality" (pp. 8-9). The language reflects both empowerment and advocacy, which both support the values of equal rights. According to Poldma (1999), "The female voice has its foundations in social institutions such as the family, the education system, and the workplace" (p. 53). Among the South Sudanese, females have no voice in opposing any forms of restrictive or oppressive actions, or rights' violations. For the South Sudanese society to view such acts as improper, there has to be social cohesion between both females and males, who can bridge the gap through empowerment and advocacy. The acceptability of females cannot be a single gender's task, especially when violence is inflicted. Therefore, female empowerment can be reinforced by education and men who are motivated to end this injurious treatment of females. Education can help socially, economically, and politically to bring about the necessary changes.

In fact, building social inclusion can take any shape, including educational institutions, which aids in the transmission of values from society to students (Poldma 1999).

2.9 QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is determined by teachers' availability, curricula, textbooks, security, and administrative figures to supervise the functioning of the institution. Given the conservative views common in South Sudan, girls are not well empowered to gain a high quality education, and are even neglected in a variety of ways. A good quality education is defined as one in which the necessary textbooks, teachers, curricula are available and the environment is safe.

2.9.1 The Curriculum

South Sudanese students are being taught unstandardized curricula at both the primary and secondary levels (Deng 2003). These curricula have been borrowed, and sometimes adapted from neighboring countries, such as Uganda and Kenya (Deng 2003). They are then delivered to students by unqualified teachers who may not have a firm grasp of the material themselves. This has not helped students, particularly girls, learn the material well because the teachers devote the majority of their time helping boys with little understanding of the material that they have. Widening school attendance, particularly by girls, would need a standardized South Sudanese curriculum and teachers who were well equipped to teach it. This would retain more girls in school as they would not experience unsupportive, unskilled and unknowledgeable teachers. The absence of expertise in curricula will remain a burden for the new nation. The SPLM/A

movement established their curriculum during the civil war, but it was not fully maintained due to the lack of qualified teachers and supervision. Deng (2003, p. 9) cites a UNICEF/Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) report from 2002 that says that in 1998 only 54 percent of schools in South Sudan were using the SPLM's curriculum; the rest were using curricula from Kenya or Uganda. Concerned that the SPLM's curriculum would not be implemented, they partially incorporated South Sudan's existing curriculum to increase adoption. However, since there were no teachers qualified to support it, their curriculum proved weak. The new curriculum for South Sudan also did not have textbooks to support it, which in turned affect all students' performance, particularly that of girls. This gender disparity in performance may be explained by a combination of factors: (1) the curriculum was designed to suit boys; (2) boys have more time to devote to study compared to girls, who must also complete their domestic and agricultural chores (household duties are more likely to be assigned to girls and thus keep them away from fulfilling their school's expectations, so they often end up lagging behind); and (3) there were no "second chance" associated with any of these curricula so if anyone falls behind, as may be the case for girls who have less time to study and less support from male teachers, there is no chance to catch up. A final hurdle for schooling affects both boys and girls; because South Sudan has been an English-oriented country since the British invasion, the Arabic curriculum was less commonly used. However, given the obstacles facing girls in and outside of school, anything that makes their lessons more difficult is likely to affect girls more negatively than boys. So many schools remain ill-equipped in terms of basic infrastructure and supplies. Students studying in these circumstances struggle with performance.

2.9.2 Textbooks

Textbooks are other main important element of a quality education. In the absence of competent teachers, textbooks are indispensable to ensure a minimum level of learning occurs, but this has not been possible in South Sudan. The curriculum was not well equipped with suitable textbooks, and the resulting weakness of schools nationwide led to withdrawal of students. In addition to variations in syllabi used across schools in South Sudan, there was an acute shortage of textbooks, which led to students having to share. However, in the process of sharing, girls usually do not get equal access to the text books because teachers assume that they have insufficient time to study (Deng 2003).

Therefore, girls are likely to fail the standardized assessment in any subject whose curriculum is based on that of a foreign country. Deng (2003) reports data from UNICEF/SRRA that found only about half of primary students have a textbook, and only 30 percent having two (UNICEF/SRRA 2002). Children, especially girls, who have no textbooks have a high risk of not attending school. Both the quality and efficiency of education depend on the presence of competent teachers and textbooks to motivate and inform students. The dedicated teachers who have a reasonable level of academic and professional knowledge will make the learning environment interesting for students. A considerable effort has been employed to develop the new curriculum, which is considered a strong element in the quality of education, but it remains weak while there is a shortage of textbooks.

The government of Sudan considered making textbooks available for all pupils, irrespective of gender before the country was split into two, but these plans were mainly for students in the north, leaving southern students without. The Government of Sudan before the independence of South Sudan also supported the training and professional development of

teachers, who were Arabic-oriented. They implemented policies for the enhancement of teachers, including promotion and better conditions of service. However, the Sudanese government gave little attention to schools in the south. There were little or no improvements in school environments in South Sudan, including the insufficiency of textbooks and teachers. Schools in South Sudan were rarely equipped with furniture and teaching facilities, and there were few if any capacity building initiatives in education because of the war. The only schools available in South Sudan during the war were classes under large trees, so the few available books that existed were later exposed to and destroyed by rain.

2.9.3 Teachers

There are many things that affect school attendance, and the lack of well trained teachers is one of many that has created the gap among girls and boys. Unqualified teachers are more likely to lead to the dropping out of girls than boys because they have little time to study. 63 percent of teachers have been trained to teach the new curriculum, however, much of these are in the north. The ministry of education seems to generalize Sudan based on the progress taking place in the north, which is not applicable to institutions in the south.

In fact, a South Sudanese scholar has noticed a negative impact on students when most primary school teachers in the south are poorly trained. Usually, in South Sudan, teachers do not teach the subjects in which they were trained. The new curriculum and teachers reflected on an assessment report shows that 79 percent of teachers perform satisfactorily in their teaching (Deng 2003). As mentioned earlier, South Sudan ranked second from the bottom in the world in terms of the provision of education, yet some scholars appear to have different perspectives on

issues related to education. Given the barriers to education, the gender gap in South Sudan, the lack of qualifications for many teachers, and the performance of students, Deng's reports should be treated with caution.

The mobilization of teachers is a serious concern due to the lack of salary. To help support themselves, even some highly committed, qualified teachers choose also to grow crops and keep animals. Teachers work in extreme conditions, with a lack of sufficient incentives or salaries, forcing them to farm or look for other employment opportunities (Deng 2003).

Seven percent of teachers have received college training and the rest either received some in-service training (48 percent) or are completely untrained (45 percent) (UNICEF/OLS 2002, p. 4). The well trained may be discouraged about the lack of incentives or leadership within the school system (Deng 2003). Making matters worse, female teachers experience more bias in the workplace, making it an unattractive profession for women (Deng 2003).

The acute shortage of trained teachers in South Sudan remains a problem facing the nation's education system. Few teachers have the necessary materials to help students, and some may be forced to share books with other teachers (Deng 2003). Deng (2003, p. 10) observed that, "Both quality and efficiency depend on the presence of a competent, motivated, dedicated teacher with a reasonable level of academic and professional knowledge." The lack of teaching materials may also motivate teachers to change careers in search of a better job. The reform of the structure and content of the education system in the 1990s has led to the need to reform teacher training.

2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that guides the research questions in this study is Edward Burnett Tylor and Emile Durkheim's theory of culture. According to Victor Barnouw (1985, pp. 4-5), the term *culture* was first used by Tylor in 1871. Tylor (1877, p. 1) pioneered "primitive culture," which he defined as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." However, Barnouw altered Tylor's definition of "primitive culture" by defining culture separately to give us sense of what culture is today and what it was then: "A culture is the way of life of a group of people, the complex of shared concepts and patterns of learned behavior that are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation" (Barnouw 1985, p. 5). The culture of the South Sudanese reflects the combination of primitive cultures and culture that are quite complex when it comes to how society functions following cultural norms.

For instance, among the South Sudanese, parents' perspectives of their daughters are an indication of how some cultures retain their values. Culturally, the limitations given to every female child are overwhelming. Cultural theorists, especially Tylor, who is known for cultural evolution, believe in progress, so there should be an alternative or room for new traditions as society moves forward. In that regard, Tylor's values change, so he incorporated elements that make society function well. An example of this in modern times is EFA. The new cultures tend to interfere with what is considered old cultures. Whether a girl is educated is a decision that should be left to the parents and the girl herself to decide, rather than cultural ideologies. The rigid component of cultures appears to be the major concern regarding how education is provided in some countries, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. However, culturally, what constitutes

success or achievement is transmitted by community members through various interactions. That is why children imitate what is considered positive such as becoming rich cattle keepers, warriors, and more. With that being said, cultures do not object to success or achievement. Victor Barnouw (1985) identifies four types of achievements: (1) self-motivated achievement, (2) encouraged or inspired achievement, (3) achievement as repayment achievement, and (4) achievement as expiation.

According to Stjepan G. Mestrovic (1993, pp. 139-142), Emile Durkheim had the following perspective on education:

All development of individualism has the effect of opening moral consciousness to new ideas and rendering it more demanding. Since every advance that it makes results in a higher conception, a more delicate sense of the dignity of man, individualism cannot be developed without making apparent to us as contrary to human dignity, as unjust, social relations that at one time did not seem unjust at all.

Gender inequality in education comes in many forms, as mentioned earlier. Culture sees boys' intellectual ability to succeed, while it has different views of girls' education. Culture sees girls' intellectual capabilities narrowed due to many factors, such as pregnancy, household tasks, minding children, gender bias in the society, and so forth. It is a well known concept in South Sudan that parents have special preferences for their children when it comes to educating them. Parents' selection of who should be educated is based on the gender of a child; usually boys are considered more constructive to the families and to communities than the girls. For that very reason, parents are more likely to invest in children, especially boys, who will later support the family as they age. Parents' aspirations and expectations are that their boys will be more likely to maintain the family legacy. Given that parents perceive the investment in boys' education positively, South Sudanese cattle keepers sell their cattle to pay for boys to attend school. The returns are expected to outweigh what girls could accomplish in their lifetime. Sons, who finish

school, get jobs that pay well, which may allow a family to buy more cows, making the whole investment worthwhile. Some examples of jobs that pay well include teaching, working in agriculture (e.g., raising staple crops like tea and coffee), and starting a microenterprise. If the emphasis was placed on equal education opportunities for females, they would have benefited from being trained to become teachers, military leaders, school administrators, engineers in the oil industry, and agriculturalists (working with one of the staple crops like tea, coffee, and legumes such as grains, peanuts, and beans). More specifically, girls' education is not that beneficial after schooling since in the male-dominated society, women's earnings are determined by men, so their salary will always remain low. Additionally, once children are born, women are unlikely to work outside the home.

It is common for educated girls to marry, so her education no longer benefits her parents. Therefore, parental resentment of their daughters' education is considered legitimate in South Sudanese culture. Additionally, the quality of education that girls receive is poor due to bias in the classroom and girls' inability to spend significant time studying. This obligation to perform domestic duties reflects the culturally accepted attitudes regarding women's economic roles. As noted on the *Sudan Tribune* by one girl, "Generally, in South Sudan, girls are supposed to stay at home and clean, while boys attend school," explained the 14-year-old, who is one of five daughters" (Uma 2011). Given these attitudes, girls' time will be spent at home while boys focus on their studies. These demands on part of the girls eventually affect their participation in school, leaving them underrepresented in education. The situation is compounded by the fact that parents often disapprove of girls attending school, since the parents have been conditioned by society to adopt the cultural gender bias that existed when they grew up. There are also concerns over the

possibility of pregnancy in co-educational schools and the need for girls to learn household chores in preparation for marriage.

For many tribes in South Sudan, girls are considered financial resources for families. Dowries are used as a substitution for their labor or an exchange of labor. Therefore, it is extremely important to the parents to take their obligation seriously to raise a girl who may bring wealth to the family. Little girls are matched to future husbands at an early age, so the parents must ensure the girl is well brought up to suit the expectations of the future spouse.

Culture changes what it means to be an educated woman in South Sudan: “In some communities, an educated woman who carries a pen rather than a bundle of firewood is considered a disgrace and by virtue of her education may attract a lower dowry” (Uma 2011). This is contrary to Western values, where an educated woman is respected and valued. The words of one young bride present a personal angle to the practice of forced marriage: “I was married off at a very tender age. . . . My parents were given so many cows by my husband. Up to now, my younger sisters are not allowed to attend school. They are often told to follow my example” (Uma 2011). Dowry paying is an ancient tradition, but many South Sudanese women are against it now, and they are calling for the practice to be abolished to allow girls to have the chance to obtain an education.

The issue of educating girls is beginning to receive attention as women take little steps to push for cultural changes on how girls are valued in South Sudan. The movement has reached members of the government, with the undersecretary in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs noting, “Our communities have to start valuing the importance of educating the ‘girl-child’. . . . Too much attachment to some of the cultural norms that are negative towards girls will remain a set-back to the girl-child education policy” (Uma 2011).

The traditional cultures are less likely to affect girls negatively whose parents are educated. The education of parents is one of the main factors expected to contribute positively to children's education. Educated parents are more likely to provide assistance and encourage their children's learning compared to less-educated parents. They are more likely to identify the advantages of education as a whole (Delgado-Gaitan 1991). Educated parents often have different perspectives than non-educated parents of their children's education potential. Ultimately it is an aspiration of all parents to give their children a better future and this is what most encourages parents to invest in their children's success. According to Julie K. Nelson (2009, p.6):

Their children practice and learn the behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors. Therefore, it is likely that parents who achieved the goal of an advanced degree tend to encourage disciplined study habits in their children. Parents who did not pursue higher education are less likely to have frequent observational learning opportunities to develop dedicated study habits.

While that may be true in many countries, it is not the case for uneducated parents in South Sudan. Their children enjoy non-interrupted education because the parents are aware of the benefits it brings; therefore, both parents' education will make them prioritize the education of children, regardless of their gender.

The mother's education is one of the prime factors that raises the bargaining power and information regarding this key variable. Women with higher education are able to earn more, improving their relative status in the household. The mother's education has a strong influence on her daughter's education. Educated mothers can help their children with their school work, especially during the primary years. They also provide positive reinforcement of their children's educational and occupational achievement. Their standards and expectations for their daughters are generally different from those of uneducated mothers, and their daughters usually have

greater confidence in their abilities to pursue an education. Mothers may prefer to allocate resources to their daughters while fathers generally prefer giving to their sons. Boys usually have special privileges in South Sudan's culture, but it is a little different if the mother has been educated; educated mothers tend to look beyond things that hinder their education.

Parents fear the nature of the environment in which their children spend time, given how vulnerable they perceive girls to be (Uma 2011). Based on a 2008 study conducted by UNICEF on the socio-economic barriers to education in South Sudan, educational institutions were ultimately found to be very unfriendly environments for girls. The majority of the parental concerns about sending their girls to school revolved around concerns of sexual harassment, early pregnancy, and child-to-child violence as some of the major obstacles to girls' education in South Sudan (Uma 2011). According to Julius Uma, "In spite of a number of attempts to promote gender sensitization there remains a widespread belief that when sending children to school, girls should have a lower priority than boys" (Uma 2011). He went on to state, "In the large measure this is due to the practice of the prospective husband paying a 'bride price' usually in cattle, for his wife."

Elvin Hatch (1973, p. 169) studied Durkheim's theory of culture, noting:

According to Durkheim, cooperation and cohesion in society are brought about because people are controlled by a system of beliefs and sentiments—a collective consciousness—which contains their natural egoism. These beliefs and sentiments regulate and modify, rather than express, the individual's person interests, and consequently they are a *sui generis* reality.

The cultures in a country like South Sudan are "sentiments" of "a collective consciousness," which is where people build their "beliefs" that form the cultural norms. Females are controlled based on these ideologies. These two theorists reflect on what keeps men and women apart when it comes to maintaining cultures.

2.11 CONCLUSION

The literature review overall reflect grievances faced by females in the education system in South Sudan. Although there was no research on gender inequity in education and opportunities after the longest civil war, the materials gathered present information related to social injustice in the South Sudanese education system. The post-conflict issues remain challenging to females whether in obtaining an education or in the job market. The literature review indicates gender disparities in literacy rates, with over 92 percent of South Sudanese women illiterate. Overall, South Sudan ranks as the worst education provider due to the quality of education it provides. For instance, there is a lack of trained teachers, no common curriculum, few women teachers, and insecurity, which places girls at great disadvantage due to insufficient protection.

The culture supports the government in playing negative roles in females' education. Culturally, girls are considered the wealth of the families; therefore, girls' education is usually interrupted by marriage at an early age. Since civil wars have depleted families' resources, families are now dependent on dowries. For these very reasons, girls are not empowered because they have no women role models and there are no advocates to fight the injustice of exclusion or the violence against them.

Gender equity in education will remain far from being achieved as long as the government fails to impose age limits for marriage and fails to uphold human rights laws to protect girls. EFA may not be achieved in 2015. Until it is, however, gender parity will not be achieved in South Sudan. Another problem facing education in the newest nation is the use of textbooks or curricula from neighboring countries, which are not well understood by the untrained teachers. The use of foreign countries' books is not very helpful to girls or South Sudanese students in general. The girls who are located far away from school learn little since

the distance discourages girls from attending school due to many obstacles they encountered on their way.

3.0 METHODS

Sample selection, location of interest, research design, data collection, strengths, limitations, key variables, and conclusions of this research method will be discussed in this section. Each of the variables is discussed individually or in groups, if there are reasons to put them together.

3.1 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

South Sudan is the area of interest, given its social problems associated with females' education inequity and opportunity post-conflict. It cannot be denied that the South Sudanese females have gone through a lot over the course of civil war, which has left over 92 percent of them illiterate. This statistic was the primary motivator for this study of gender inequality in education in the entire country. Currently, women and girls are among the groups who are most underrepresented in education. There are plentiful reasons why females are marginalized in educational attainment, such as early marriage, gender bias, forced marriage, and many forms of discrimination in the system. The biases against females in education have roots in the weakness of the new nation's economy. Before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), girls' chances of going to school were very low, but now little changes have occurred in enrollment. However, the progress is not enough at the primary level (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Primary School Pupil Enrollment by State and Gender, 2008-2010

State	Year	Total	Male	Female	Male (%)	Female (%)
Central Equatoria	2010	130,225	70,233	59,992	53.9	46.1
	2009	138,934	75,631	63,303	54.4	45.6
	2008	113,446	63,685	49,761	56.1	43.9
East Equatoria	2010	111,958	67,431	44,527	60.2	39.8
	2009	111,413	67,024	44,389	60.2	39.8
	2008	112,051	68,971	43,080	61.6	38.4
West Equatoria	2010	68,374	38,211	30,163	55.9	44.1
	2009	70,803	39,472	31,331	55.7	44.3
	2008	79,749	44,422	35,327	55.7	44.3
Jonglei	2010	254,750	156,422	98,328	61.4	38.6
	2009	246,578	153,422	93,156	62.2	37.8
	2008	184,223	117,808	66,415	63.9	36.1
Unity	2010	155,262	102,245	53,017	65.9	34.1
	2009	145,224	97,205	48,019	66.9	33.1
	2008	144,104	95,284	48,820	66.1	33.9
Upper Nile	2010	187,642	108,784	78,858	58.0	42.0
	2009	202,425	119,792	82,633	59.2	40.8
	2008	217,187	129,603	87,584	59.7	40.3
Lakes	2010	115,984	80,404	35,580	69.3	30.7
	2009	110,315	76,059	34,256	68.9	31.1
	2008	96,290	65,469	30,821	68.0	32.0
Warrap	2010	172,890	123,084	49,806	71.2	28.8
	2009	160,031	113,385	46,646	70.9	29.1
	2008	129,760	90,647	39,114	69.9	30.1
Western Bhar Ghazel	2010	62,093	37,747	24,346	60.8	39.2
	2009	52,990	32,925	20,065	62.1	37.9
	2008	57,853	34,075	23,778	58.9	41.1
Northern Bhar Ghazel	2010	142,696	95,647	47,049	67.0	33.0
	2009	141,867	96,889	44,978	68.3	31.7
	2008	149,588	99,555	50,033	66.6	33.4
Totals	2010	1,401,874	880,208	521,666	62.8	37.2
	2009	1,380,580	871,804	508,776	63.1	36.9
	2008	1,284,252	809,519	474,733	63.0	37.0

Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011, p. 16).

Table 2. Primary School Teachers and Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) by State and Gender, 2008-2010

State	Year	Total	Male	Female	Male (%)	Female (%)	PTR
Central Equatoria	2010	3,579	2,720	859	76.0	24.0	36.4
	2009	4,306	3,383	923	78.6	21.4	32.3
	2008	3,639	2,994	644	82.3	17.7	31.2
Eastern Equatoria	2010	3,038	2,632	406	86.6	13.4	36.9
	2009	2,923	2,557	366	87.5	12.5	38.1
	2008	3,137	2,767	371	88.2	11.8	35.7
Western Equatoria	2010	2,040	1,750	290	85.8	14.2	33.5
	2009	2,082	1,787	295	85.8	14.2	34.0
	2008	2,176	1,853	323	85.1	14.9	36.6
Jonglei	2010	2,785	2,559	226	91.9	8.1	91.5
	2009	2,923	2,677	246	91.6	8.4	84.4
	2008	2,329	2,125	204	91.2	8.8	79.1
Unity	2010	2,250	2,144	106	95.3	4.7	69.0
	2009	2,388	2,206	182	92.4	7.6	60.8
	2008	2,899	2,731	168	94.2	5.8	49.7
Upper Nile	2010	2,945	2,401	544	81.5	18.5	63.7
	2009	2,899	2,304	595	79.5	20.5	69.8
	2008	3,117	2,533	584	81.3	18.7	69.7
Lakes	2010	2,285	2,116	169	92.6	7.4	50.8
	2009	2,211	2,045	166	92.5	7.5	49.9
	2008	1,987	1,830	157	92.1	7.9	48.5
Warrap	2010	3,177	2,975	202	93.6	6.4	54.4
	2009	3,207	2,998	209	93.5	6.5	49.9
	2008	2,760	2,554	207	92.5	7.5	47.0
Western Bhar Ghazel	2010	1,289	1,024	265	79.4	20.6	48.2
	2009	1,104	855	249	77.4	22.6	48.0
	2008	1,098	821	277	74.8	25.2	52.7
Northern Bhar Ghazel	2010	3,270	3,051	219	93.3	6.7	43.6
	2009	2,532	2,332	200	92.1	7.9	56.0
	2008	2,770	2,532	238	91.4	8.6	54.0
Totals	2010	26,658	23,372	3,286	87.7	12.3	52.6
	2009	26,575	23,144	3,431	87.1	12.9	52.0
	2008	25,912	22,739	3,173	87.8	12.2	49.6

Source: Government of Southern Sudan (2011, p. 17).

3.2 DATA SOURCES

The key method for this study was archival. Important sources come from the United Nations, University of Pittsburgh library archives, academic journal, and books. The foundation of my thesis draws on secondary sources. In addition to archival analysis, I will also conducted a discourse analysis of leading websites, newspapers (e.g., *Sudan Tribune*, *New Sudan Vision*, and others news network), political speeches, television news reports, and movie documentaries.

All data in this thesis was collected to maintain validity in my research findings. Validity means “well based or grounded; sound; just; good or sufficient in law” (Patterson 1991, p. 363). It has also been described as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell 2005, p. 106). This description reflects what Golafshani (2003, p. 599) writes on the topic:

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit “the bull’s eye” of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of other.

Creswell and Miller (2000) offer nine strategies or procedures to check for validity in research findings, some of which will be used here. The nine strategies or procedures of validity provided by Creswell and Miller are triangulation, disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, collaboration, the audit trail, thick rich descriptive and peer debriefing. However, after careful screening, I found few of these strategies or procedures to be relevant and associated with my research study. This research is conducted under the constructivist paradigm, which is one of the eight strategies and values credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and authenticity (fairness) (Creswell and Miller 2000). *Triangulation* validity, “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence

among multiple and different sources of information to form themes and categories in a study” (Creswell and Miller 2000, p. 126) is also employed. Finally, reviewers and readers provide the *audit trail* and *peer Debriefing* (Creswell and Miller 2000) for the study.

The *audit trail* allows for the accuracy of the data to be examined. This technique is considered important because it determines the accuracy and the bias of the study. I have ensured that the *audit trail* has clear information regarding the decisions and activities associated with the research (Creswell and Miller 2000). The readers confirm credibility and share their understanding of the materials. The final type of validity is *peer debriefing*, which is “the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research or the phenomenon being explored” (Creswell and Miller 2000, p. 128). The peer review is very important because it provides support and guides the researcher. It also challenges the researcher’s assumptions and also pushes him or her to think critically. Peer review or debriefing also asks questions to understand the intentions, methods, and interpretations of the research study (Creswell and Miller 2000). In this case, peer review or debriefing is important in ensuring that facts are employed in a manner that will not reflect bias. Researcher judgments are not enough to determine whether materials, and therefore the conclusions, are accurate.

However, peer review and debriefing have been very helpful in this study because of the multiple perspectives or opinions that I received. These sessions helped me to identify what areas of my research needed to be expanded or disregarded. The multiple perspectives helped in the process to fulfill what I anticipated, but it was also very challenging at times to adhere to this rigorous reflection process. I have learned a lot through both peer review and debriefing; therefore, it was very beneficial in assisting me to accomplish this research study.

I assume bias to be absent if the findings support each other. Anything that affects the validity of the research and the consistency of the data has been screened out. Reassembling the facts through validity is one of the mechanisms and techniques used to assess this research study accurately. In addition the provenance and validity of all sources in this study were verified.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

The research design is both a cross sectional analysis and a descriptive research study. These are highly preferred because they are not time demanding. Longitudinal analysis is both time consuming and costly.

Cross sectional analysis is so called because data are collected at one point in time and the relationships between characteristics are investigated. Importantly, because this study does not look at time trends, it cannot establish causes and effect (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao 2004; Babbie 2013). This research examines gender inequality in education, which has been going on for decades.

To understand the in-depth meaning of this descriptive research study, I have used data that answer the research questions. Descriptive research has five different definitions; I have chosen the one that is relevant to gender disparities in education or the female population in South Sudan. It aims to “describe systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest” (Dulock 1993, p. 154).

4.0 FINDINGS

I have identified four different types of outcomes as findings—strengths, weaknesses, validity, and implications—which proved to be important results of the research. Every aspect of these findings is a positive contribution to the literature, so each will be identified and discussed in detail.

The weaknesses and strengths section describes the hurdles that I encountered over the course of this research. They deserve mention since they mirror the progress. The validity or reliability of the materials used in this study is important to discern as the materials indicate the problem of gender inequality in education in this part of Africa. The implications are substantial and important as they will inform future studies and practice. Those involved in advocacy for gender equality in education in South Sudan can incorporate the findings of this study into their work. The information provided may empower those who are willing to fight for equal social justice in education.

Very little research has been done in the past on gender inequity in education in South Sudan. Therefore, the unique contribution this study has made to the small literature in this field is a considerable strength. Recognizing this gap in the literature gave me much motivation and strength which I employed over the course of this study. To overcome the hurdle presented by a paucity of research on this topic, data were collected on similar social problems in northern

Sudan where females experience exclusion from education. The validity of the findings were verified through the literature review, numerical figures provided by different sources vary, so these figures are treated with caution.

4.1 STRENGTHS

Knowing that this illiteracy is what kept South Sudan behind before independence was a strength because without education, there would be no stable economy for the country and for the female population. Looking back, over the course of the civil war, females have been widely subjected to rape and many other forms of violence, including violations of their rights, which all continue to undermine the distribution of education. The poor state of education for females piqued my curiosity, motivating me to identify challenges being faced by females in the entire country, be they educational, social, or economic.

Many countries have not yet closed the gender gap in education, leaving females lagging behind educationally, socially, and economically. South Sudan is a prime example of those countries that are not doing well adopting the universal education agreement, and this is one of the strengths that I have identified among various sub-Saharan African countries that have failed to adopt the agreement. Although overcoming gender inequalities in education appears an insurmountable task, this research seeks solutions to many related problems of females who experience them in their daily lives; lack of access to quality education and recurring domestic violence have created a vicious cycle of female social and economic inequality. Even though this research study is meant to campaign for the welfare of individuals, it also makes an important contribution by helping to restructure broken policies.

The majority of the country's prominent leaders have used strategies and approaches that are impossible to recognize practically because the system is contributing very little to the lives of females. The significance of the study also is in educating societies regarding what is inappropriate or dishonoring that which is considered right. The findings of this research study address the issues of gender equality in education and the need for cultural relevancy. These two issues are essential to maintain for the foundational human rights of South Sudanese females. The failure to intervene could be well associated with weakness in fighting for a cause like women's rights.

According to Sandy Ruxton (2004), "Whatever we do, the primary aim should be to work to end discrimination against women and girls, to achieve gender equality and equity, and to promote the human rights of women and girls" (p.24). Even though all humans are not obligated to promote tolerance, empathy for the pain of others normally justify why others sacrifice their time to fight the injustice. Ruxton continues:

Otherwise, we risk undermining the efforts of women, and we fail to transform the very system of patriarchy that is at the root of the problem we address. For example, in some countries the message of the White Ribbon Campaign focuses on the links between men's violence and the discrimination women suffer. Campaigns work to establish links with women's organizations, to support those groups, to develop joint initiatives, and to encourage men to listen to the voices of women. (p. 24)

Our consciousness of social problems and how much these social problems hurt the welfare of society awakens and energizes people who are interested in acting for a better solution. The message is very clear because supporting the just cause brings mutual benefits for the community or particular groups of people who are suffering, such as female exclusion from education.

In this case, advocates must at least know the nature of the problems before reaching out for those who are affected by the problems. From time to time, people make tremendous

contributions to overcome these problems, and that is exactly how the White Ribbon Campaign was initiated. According to Ruxton,

In 1991 in Canada, a small group of men started the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC). The campaign engages in public education in order to end men's silence about men's violence against women, to raise awareness among men and boys, and to mobilize them to work for change through their school, workplaces, and communities. (p. 23)

The WRC was motivated to address social problems created by especially men and boys, and they also highlighted the negative impact these problems have on women. For instant, several prominent development organization (e.g., UNESCO, USAID, and many NGOs), but many South Sudanese people are not motivated to take an action. The findings of this study show how females' education can be improved, and the results are generalizable to other societies in East Africa experiencing similar problems.

4.2 WEAKNESSES

There were many limitations associated with this research that were difficult to overcome. The greatest hurdle was a paucity of information on the topic, particularly in the academic literature. Despite the many limitations I encountered, the enthusiasm I have for this particular social problem being experienced by females far outweighs the burdens of unavailability of materials. Many attempts were made to search for primary-source materials to help ground this study and it come to the point where I almost choose another subject to write my thesis on. But I realized gender disparity in education needs to be better researched and understood to help rectify existing education policies that need to be reformed. The significance of this subject matter has

encouraged me to put in an extra effort to overcome this weakness in the literature. I have noticed that this study has the potential to advance and raise awareness about equal rights for females in relation to males. Because of its importance, it is worth investing time to seek the truth about the issues surrounding females' education in South Sudan. The confidence I gained throughout this thesis-writing process, helped me develop an unyielding hope for better education policies that can be established in South Sudan. The gap in the literature limitation has encouraged me to stretch my focus not only on South Sudan, but also on North Sudan because some of the materials that I used reflect general education in both regions before independence.

This meant that the reliability of extant materials was not always ascertainable. The lack of materials is symbolic of the problem: those in a position to help, for example by conducting research, did not do so due to gender bias and a belief that it was an insignificant subject matter. In fact, they encouraged me to pursue alternate topics associated with education, such as curriculum, leadership and many other important subjects. The beneficiaries of this study are females underrepresented in education. One criticism of this study is that some view it as an invasion of "rich cultures."

To counter that argument, Ruxton (2004), addressed the problem explicitly based on the male perspective of what it means to expand education equality to females. According to Ruxton,

Men are often fearful when presented with gender mainstreaming agenda. The advancement of women may be perceived as a threat to men's personal and professional status. This may be buttressed by anxiety about ridicule or compromised masculinity if one is widely perceived as an advocate of gender equality. (p. 197)

Cultural differences among people well informed in this area present major obstacles. In the course of research, I encountered a number of men who were hindering the progress of research. Some were unable to release documents on the subject because they would not

contribute to such a controversial subject matter. This demotion of a social problem is related to the position of “culturalcentrists” (Edmunds 2001). There are culturalentristists who conceal the true cultural values in public, but then abide by certain cultural practices such as dress code and family traditions, which are considered important in the family (Edmunds 2001). People with whom I interacted appear to be culturalcentrists even though they did not consistently follow this ideology. The reluctance by some to provide me with the necessary materials to prove the validity of the research led to them concealing some information. However, at later points I was frequently able to persuade others to provide me with accurate and relevant information about gender inequalities in the country.

Another limitation is that the few scholars interested in this topic are not from South Sudan. As a consequence, various materials related to education and the gender gap in education were compiled from the situation in North Sudan, and were not thorough or indeed applicable to the south.

In a country devastated by a prolonged civil war, there are limited scholarly publications on social problems, let alone gender issues in education. South Sudan is unlike many countries where scientists and scholars freely express their knowledge and opinions through articles and book to educate the public about social issues such as the gender gap in education, violence against women, and so on. It was hard during the wars to conduct research for the public interest, which has affected work being conducted in South Sudanese universities and colleges.

Many of the higher education institutions were temporarily closed or moved to North Sudan over the course of the civil war. For those that remained, the ability to conduct research was severely constrained. This, together with the general lack of scholarly interest in women’s educational issues, explains the lack of peer-reviewed publications relevant to this study.

Fortunately, many agencies are currently involved in education in the country, pushing for equal education for all children. However, even materials provided by these agencies were not enough to complete the research. As shown, war affects social functioning. The war in South Sudan has destabilized the usual lives of people, and the disruption continues even after conflict. However, even before the civil wars began, there was little research conducted on the gender gap that existed in education and it just never gained momentum. In an effort to avoid bias, I did not underestimate the availability of the materials on gender issues in South Sudan. Many development agencies are currently involved in education initiatives, including those which are advocating equal education for all children irrespective of their gender. However, materials provided by these agencies were not enough to complete the research to the depth and level I had initially hoped. Given that this topic has been neglected by many scholars, there are significant burdens and opportunities on scholars who are interested in the subject.

4.3 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The lack of literature about females' education in South Sudan, makes it is very important that this study has clear implications for researchers choosing to pursue this topic. Lack of intervention has left violence against females very common across South Sudan due to neglect of basic human rights especially related to education. One positive outcome from this study would be for more researchers to address the issue.

Gender inequity in education, females often marrying at a very young age, discrimination, and so forth continue. Future research on how gender inequality affects the job

market in South Sudan would be a useful and obvious next step, so that policy makers and educators can see the long-ranging implications of their actions towards women.

This study adds to the body of literature surrounding culture theory, particularly culture associated with the South Sudanese and their perceptions of education. This study has made a significant contribution by being one of the first to solidify research on gender inequality in education in South Sudan, providing a useful starting point for other scholars interested in promoting social justice.

The findings reported here may be used to empower underprivileged groups to fight for social justice. It also provides evidence of the problem in South Sudan. Both of these allow the study to address the gender inequalities in education system. This will hopefully mobilize mainstream society to accept that females are human and deserve equal rights. Ultimately, this study is intended to transform people, governments, and policies. It will serve as an important resource for advocates of the vulnerable and students of social justice.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are various ways to reduce discrimination against females in education in South Sudan. Some of these are long term, others are short term, allowing agencies and the government to intervene whatever their level of funding.

First, build boarding schools. This almost eliminates the issues of security and that hinder girls' attendance. The security of all the schools must be an agreement between the education sector and national police to ensure that students' welfare is protected. As it has been mentioned

repeatedly throughout this study that insecurity is one of the obstacles facing south Sudanese even after the CPA was achieved in 2005. Insecurity has continued to affect how education is provided from primary to secondary levels due to the distance many students face because they live far from their schools. This distance between where the student's school and home village is located, often exposes female students to violence. Building dormitory or boarding schools is one of the best options for overcoming this violence.

Second, subsidize tuition, so that price is not a factor in school attendance. Subsidizing schools will help resolve female attendance, so it is very critical that this option is reevaluated for those who cannot afford the cost of attending. Financial assistance should be given to poor students, especially girls, who are less likely to succeed in public schools which are often underfunded. Another option would be to make school tuition free for girls who perform well on certain assessments. This idea will boost girls' attendance and it will also help to eliminate dropout. Dropout is caused by many problems and the cost of tuition is one of the many that forces disadvantaged girls out of school. Subsidizing tuition is an important step toward stabilizing and providing greater access to education.

Third, the government should address and impose laws to cement the rights of females. Females should be allowed to voice their concerns about marriage and education. Culture change that is led by the government will begin to reduce the culturalcentrist approach that threatens the welfare of every female in the country.

Fourth, achieve two of the MDGs. They will help provide education to all, irrespective of gender. The two goals that would maximize return on the effort required are Goals 2 and 3, and are summarized by Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim (2005, p. XVIII):

Goal 2: "Achieve universal primary education: Target 2: A Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of

primary schooling” and Goal 3: “Promote gender equality and empower women. Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.”

Fifth, recommendations on this research wouldn’t be anything without the protection of children from all kinds of violence (e.g., being abducted as a child soldier, early marriage, child labor, kidnapping, etc.). South Sudan has not been able to protect many of the children during the civil war and even afterwards. Therefore, making the protection of children a priority should at least be recognized through the 1989 Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), which was meant to protect children during and after violence. The CRC position will help hold accountable those who commit crimes against children and humanity. This is perhaps the most important recommendation of all, since education cannot be effective if children are victims of violence.

Sixth, many South Sudanese do not communicate and listen to children even if they are old enough to voice their concerns. For example, girls are usually very resentful about arranged and forced marriages. And parents and relatives need to be educated about how to communicate effectively and appropriately with children. Furthermore most parents are not aware of the 1989 CRC and need to be informed about it. Recognize the 1989 CRC, which was meant to protect children during and after violence. Particularly important is Article 19.1:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (CRC 1989, Art. 19.1)

Also pertinent to South Sudan is Article 12, “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (CRC 1989.Art 12).

Seventh, enforce the legal age for marriage. Implementations of this law will help girls finish elementary and even secondary school if they have means to do so financially. Along with the need to be able to communicate effectively with their children, is the need to honor the legal age of when a child should marry. Many South Sudanese have disregarded the legal age for marriage, which is 18. This has become one of the major problems with laws in the country when existing laws are not enforced. For that very reason, children are often married at an early age, but the government has failed to hold those who are involved accountable for this inhumane crime against children.

Eighth, implement a teacher training system and ongoing teacher development. A weakness of existing education system that has become a major problem facing girls is the lack of trained teachers. Therefore, opening more training centers for teachers must be at a least considered to ensure retention of females and all students. It is especially important to establish teacher training institutions in the more remote regions of the country. Qualified teachers, especially women teachers—who are able to serve as positive role models—are more likely to empower young girls in their classes.

Ninth, employ more women teachers. The absence of many women teachers in the workforce is among many of the problems affect schooling for many girls. Therefore, recruiting and training female teachers has a long-lasting impact on girls. Female teachers will create lasting, positive impressions on young girls who are more likely to dropout; these women are better able to relate to female students in terms of in-class and out-of-class matters. For those female students who have never had female relatives with an educated background, it is very important that they have positive role models, especially female teachers, who they can relate and look up to. This strategy is meant to promote tolerance and acceptance in the education

environment. Adopting this recommendation can help improve attendance of girls whether in the primary or secondary school levels.

And tenth, the government must allocate appropriate financial resources to ensure all these policies are implemented. Since “sufficient funding is rarely attached to the commitments” (Hyer et al. 2008, p.141), the government must ensure measures are taken to pass laws that will address these gender inequalities issues in education in South Sudan.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study has identified and investigated one of the greatest social problems facing the female population in South Sudan: inequality between the sexes in education. The problem is so severe that almost 93% of women are illiterate. Bias and discrimination are cultural norms that pose a threat to females' access to education. Low female education rates lead to their underrepresentation in the job market, thus reducing the productivity of the country economically, socially and politically. The privilege of men over women has dictated how females are treated in mainstream society. Without equal education for both sexes, development in this post-conflict period will suffer.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM

Gender inequality in education is a major concern facing women during and after the civil war in South Sudan. The consequences of bias against female education in the country have been noticed by NGOs and the international community. The agencies involved have noticed a variety of sources of gender disparities in the region's education.

For over 50 years of the war in South Sudan, the education of females has been undermined. Given the war's major influence on today's education system, and society as a whole, it is a useful viewpoint from which to review everything presented in this study. The civil

war has been blamed for every aspect of educational weakness; it uprooted millions, destroying their property and livelihood. The destruction wrought by the civil war crippled education and exposed many children to violence. Given the nature of the social problems, education became the last priority for many children. Many schools were disrupted by the civil war, leading South Sudan to become one of the worst education providers worldwide at both the primary and secondary levels.

Gender disparity in education and opportunities in the job market are all reflected in the country's economic, social, and political participation. These have created instability because the welfare of the country's majority has been affected. UNESCO and USAID have identified a lack of female teachers as a problem and are pushing for equal education at the elementary through secondary levels to reflect gender equality. However, there has been reluctance on part of the South Sudanese to ensure the inclusion of girls.

Critical issues against females in the country include early marriage, violence against women, rape, forced marriage and other forms of violence girls encounter while attending school. However, all these acts of violence are tacitly condoned by the local culture and lack of enforcing existing laws. The lack of safety has taken its toll on females' education, as the distance of schools from villages exposed young girls to rebels and Sudanese armed forces over the course of the civil war. During the war, forced and arranged marriages were common. The cultural practice of brides having dowries has diminished educational ambitions for girls. So as long as these marriages exist, school attendance rates will be low among girls, especially while girls are expected to perform all the domestic duties, leaving little time or energy for study. The cultural norms are responsible for gender disparity in education in the South because mainstream society pays little attention to females.

The access and retention tends to play a minor role, since safety is the major concern among girls seeking an education, making it harder for them to achieve their potential. Males overwhelmingly dominate primary and secondary schools. These situations impact females by perpetuating the cultural lack of support for girls' education. The post-conflict problems, such as tribal conflicts, militias, proxies, an unstable economy, gender inequalities, border demarcation, and others provide related indicators of the limited education obtained by females.

The Millennium Development Goals are pushing countries like South Sudan to adapt and provide quality education to both sexes. However, the MDGs continue to be ignored. The aim to implement universal primary education has provisions requiring every country to incorporate MDGs' policies to address gender inequalities in education. The goals of the MDGs are considered important tools to help all children in primary education, regardless of their gender, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliations.

The SPLM/A have not addressed gender and cultural issues in education, but the leadership, under Dr. John Garang, still believed that they were supporting quality education in the country. NGOs and the international community characterized Dr. Garang's position in education as positive, because he believed education could make South Sudan "self-reliant." Nevertheless, his position on gender disparity was not very clear. Girls' needs and safety were never prioritized by the SPLM/A under his leadership, and there was no change in the GPI in primary school during his leadership. Even now, girls are still underrepresented in the school system.

The patriarchal society has defined how education is provided to children, which in turn affects the universalization of primary education. The objectification of females based on their cultural norms has caused a drastic and compelling absence of girls in the job market. The

gender stratification in South Sudanese society does not only place females at the bottom of the hierarchy, it also deprives them of their rights through the violation of laws.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study are grouped into strengths, weaknesses, issues of validity, and implications. The study provides a solid foundation for future research, which is much needed.

I focused on gender equity and elements that made females lag in education in South Sudan. This was the greatest strength of the research. The emotive aspect of this research is also a strength, motivating me to identify challenges being faced by females in the entire country educationally, politically, and economically. Weaknesses took the form of obstacles, which were common due to the lack of materials on the subject. To address this, related data were collected on similar social problems in northern Sudan, since South Sudan was part of Sudan before 9 July 2011.

The validity of the findings were verified through the literature review, although there are varying data provided by different sources so they were carefully considered and treated with caution. Various methods were used to ensure that the findings were valid, but ultimately it is the reader who will make their own determination. These validities include triangulation, an audit trail, and peer reviews or debriefing. They are important because they examine bias and facts..

The findings of this study suggest a number of steps that may increase gender equity in education in South Sudan. The safety of female students must be prioritized. Building subsidized schools will improve girls' attendance, and it is very critical that this option is reevaluated with school security in mind. The security of all the schools must be jointly considered by the

education sector and the national police, to ensure students' welfare is protected. Females must have the right to voice their concerns about marriage and education. This can be achieved, in part, by trying to change the traditional culture. Achieving the MDGs is an important step in addressing gender disparities in education. The country should respect the CRC, which was created to protect children during and after violence. The government should uphold children's rights by allowing them to speak up for what is not in their interests, based on CRC Article 12. The legal age limit for marriage should be upheld. Teachers must receive some training and be taught to try to retain their females students. Finally, the state must allocate appropriate financial resources to ensure all the policies are implemented and gender inequalities in education is addressed.

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